

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ernest Golden

CHA3 is Civilian Housing Area 3, and it was the housing area for the civilian workers and mostly from Pearl Harbor--civilians, civil service workers. And I think the majority were from Pearl Harbor. There was a mess hall and there was recreation hall, there was a banquet hall, and there were some houses that had been apartment-like buildings that had been erected. And usually, I think, there were about four two- to three-bedroom units to the buildings. And I would say, at that time, only bachelors, only single men were here. Pretty much men. . . . The units were not integrated. . . . Main Street toward the ocean, that must have been about four blocks. The two blocks closest to the ocean were set aside for the Negro. And the mess halls were pretty much--the mess halls were integrated. The barbershop was segregated, the theater was integrated. But overall, I think, there was integrated and segregated, combination of both. It was sort of a weird set-up really.

Ernest Golden, son of Viola and Belva Golden, was born May 21, 1923 in Athens, Georgia. The oldest of four children, Golden attended schools and held jobs in Athens until 1942.

In 1942 he left Athens and the South for a civil service job in Hawai'i. After World War II, he stayed in the islands and worked for Hampton Brazell's airport porter service. He was, at one time, part-owner of Honolulu Airport Porter Services and is now owner of another airport porter business, Versatile Services, Inc.

He and his wife Evangeline reside in Lā'ie.

Tape No. 18-6-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest Golden (EG)

April 26, 1988

Ka'a'awa, Hawai'i

BY: Kathryn Takara (KT)

KT: This is an interview with Ernest Golden for the Oral History Project at the University of Hawai'i. This is April 26, 1988.

Okay, we're sitting here having a session today in Ka'a'awa, Ernest Golden and Kathryn Takara. We will be talking about Mr. Golden's life before he came to Hawai'i and also his experiences since he has been in the Islands. Last time, you mentioned that you grew up in--what was that, North Carolina, was that . . .

EG: Athens. Athens, Georgia. [EG was born in Athens, Georgia in 1923.]

KT: Oh, Athens, Georgia. Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like being a Black man in Athens, Georgia at the period that you were there?

EG: Interesting. Because I think (the first thought that came) to mind (was) that you get out of Georgia, this was a driving thing, for me, and yet I think that Athens was rather unique. Athens was unique because it (was) a university town and because (of the) university [University of Georgia] (Athenians) both (Black and) White (were a progressive people). And I think Athenians themselves considered themselves a cut above people of other parts of Georgia, other parts of the South. Nevertheless we were in the South. I don't know how far you want me to go back.

KT: Well, tell me a little bit about Athens. How many Blacks were in Athens?

EG: When I left Athens, the population was (approximately) 27,000. And about one-fifth of (the) population, was Black.

KT: Well, the University of Georgia, it wasn't integrated when you were growing up, was it?

EG: No. The University of Georgia (was not) integrated. (There is an) interesting (incident) (that occurred at) the University of Georgia, if I could touch on it.

(The incident occurred) during my high school years--I was working for a Jewish man, (who owned) a clothing store. And this was in, I would say, the early '40s. There was (a proposal) by the president of the University of Georgia, to (erect) on the University of Georgia campus, a facility (for) Black students who were graduated from high school (in) Athens and the (surrounding) vicinity. Eugene Talmadge, at that time was governor of Georgia. [Talmadge was governor of Georgia from 1933 to 1937 and from 1940 to 1943.]

KT: I've heard of him.

EG: Anyway, the word got out of what he was proposing to do. And Eugene Talmadge fired him [the president] and fired all of the faculty (members) that (were) evidently (sympathetic to his proposal). I was a high school student at that time and don't recall in detail a lot of the ramifications of it. He fired the whole faculty, I think. And the outcome of that was the University of Georgia was taken off the accredited list of the South for quite sometime.

KT: Because they lost their faculty?

EG: Because (Governor) Eugene Talmadge (said) they were trying to integrate. The university . . .

KT: Were they actually trying to integrate the classes or they just wanted to have a separate area on campus?

EG: They just wanted to have a separate area on the campus.

KT: That Blacks could participate in?

EG: (Yes). At that time, I think it was a progressive thought that had some practicality. I think (the idea was) good. But (Governor) Eugene Talmadge (said) no. So, the University of Georgia was off the accredited list for some time. Now, I was working for (a) Jewish man. And this is, I guess, (is) an answer to some of the things that you're asking about, what is it like to grow up in the South or grow up in Athens. He talked with me on a (level) that was different from what most Southerners talk with a Black kid. He talked with me as if I was a person. And this is one of the most unique things (that happened to) me in the South, that (is) I had the opportunity to be exposed to certain people, White people, who gave me a sense of dignity. And I asked him at the time--he brought it up--"Okay, so you people think this is a bad thing, why don't you do something about it?"

He says, "Well, we the business people in this community"--he didn't say Jews, but I'm sure most of the business people in town were Jews--"didn't want to get involved in politics." So therefore, they let it happen by not doing anything.

KT: So they were economically prosperous, but in terms of politics, political influence, would you say also in term of social . . .

EG: Yes.

KT: . . . they were kind of outcasts . . .

EG: Yeah.

KT: . . . the Jewish?

EG: The Jew. There were three distinct groups of people (of this) I'm sure. Catholics were out of the mainstream, Jews were out of the mainstream, and, very definitely, Blacks. We were out of the mainstream.

KT: Hmm.

EG: (As a child, I had to fight my way to school.) This was elementary school. I went to East Athens School. I was living at one time with my grandparents. (And I walked five miles to school.)

KT: Five miles?

EG: Five miles. I've been back to Athens, and I (have checked) yes, we walked five miles to get to elementary school. From over the river (chuckles) to East Athens is where we went, okay. Now, in between (school and) where my grandparents lived, was some factories and factory workers, and the factory workers were all White. And there were times these people would be out of work and with nothing to do, and they would attack us.

KT: The children?

EG: (Yes). These grown-ups would attack us, I mean, you talk about running. We (had) to run. (Here is) a park and you (have) all these White people in the park. And they would stone you, or they would chase you, and you'd try to find a different way to get to school. Maybe go over the railroad (trussing). And don't let them see you come (crossing) the railroad (trussing) because they would attack you again. Whichever way you went, you were attacked, you were forced off the street. If you were walking down the street alone, a Black man or Black women, if there were two or more (Whites), you walked out on the street, (you) got off the sidewalk, and got in into the street. This (was a terrible time). The theaters were all [segregated], everything, everything, I hate(d) it.

KT: Like what, let's name them. The theaters, what else [was segregated]?

EG: Well, let's, (say), you want to get a sandwich or something (to eat). You've gotta figure out where to go.

KT: Dairy Queen.

EG: There was no such thing as going to sit down (at a table or counter). (You stood at the end of the) counter and you very humbly place yourself in position. You hope(d) you didn't become too conspicuous (thereby) they would say, "Well look, I'm not going to serve you." (The service to you was) take-out. You had to figure out where to go in order to get a drink of water. You had to figure out what (fountain to drink from). If you're going to the theater, naturally, you went upstairs in the balcony. Interesting thing, no hotels. If you--oh, my God, I don't know. I don't even know where to start with some of this stuff.

KT: Well, just, just keep going.

EG: The night life, well, there was no such thing. The police department was--you were fair game for them. Whenever they felt like, "Hey look, this is nigger day so let's. . . ." Here's a progressive town that has this sort of thing. I recall one morning I was walking, I had gone to school, but somehow or another, I was late and I was going back home. And there were two policemen in this town that were, let's say, "nigger policemen." These were the ones that preyed on the Black people. And one was Nellums and the other was Woods. And they drove around in their cars. I don't recall if they were marked cars. As I recall it being sort of a black sedan. (As) I walked about a couple blocks from home. It was in the morning because somehow or another I failed to get to school and they stopped me. And they interrog[ated me]---here I am, going to junior high, but they didn't do anything, but the attitude they had, sort of left something with me even now. And that was (a) determination to leave, to get out (of the South).

Incidentally, one of the Jewish people I worked for was named Boley. He's the (man who) said, "Look, you should go away from here." (It was while) I was helping him do his window (display). And he told me, "You should leave. This is no place for you."

KT: So, in other words, as a creative, artistic [type], you have that side to you and Jewish man saw that side and saw that there's no avenue for you there. And encouraged you . . .

EG: He encouraged me. He encouraged me (to leave to develop the) creative (ability) I may have had. I worked for another man, (and this brings about another) little incident I'll share with you. I entered high school a little bit ahead of my [time]. . . . I think I skipped a couple grades. (In) elementary school, I was quite a good student. I was good and so I skipped grades. When I reached junior high school--in the sixth grade, I had a tough teacher, and I worked, I worked hard. When I reached the seventh grade, somehow or another, my reputation (as a good student) had preceded me, and this teacher decided, "Hey look, Ernest knows everything so I don't have to call on him." So for the seventh grade, I coasted. And when I reached the eighth grade, that year of coasting had, somehow or another, not prepared me to enter high school and I bombed out, and could not keep up, and it got to me so I dropped out.

KT: So you dropped out a year?

EG: I dropped out. (Chuckles) I dropped out for about a couple of years. I went back and finally finished high school. But it was during the two years that I was out that this incident happened. It (is) one that (has) remained with me (and helps to explain, how people I knew in the South help to shape my outlook on life, especially people.) You asked me, what was it like in the South, this is the only way I can explain it.

I was working (in a) [meat] market (as a trucker's helper). We were delivering meats all around northeast Georgia. The man that I was working for was named Collins. He was a White (man), about fifty years old. I must have been, maybe twelve?

(One of the butchers at) the market, a White man, Tom Gibson (was considered a liberal Southern White, but would call all Blacks "Nigger"). I didn't work for Tom Gibson, I worked for Collins. One morning I walked in (to the market) and Tom Gibson said, "Hey little nigger, go into that cooler and bring me some hot dogs."

KT: Did he always address you as "little nigger"?

EG: He called (all Blacks), "niggers," . . .

KT: Oh.

EG: But I don't like being called "nigger." So when (he) called me "little nigger," I blew my top. And there's a butcher block, (this was a) round (wooden) block that had a bunch of knives (on) it, (and) I picked up one (of the knives) and threw it at him. It came, shoop, right (past) his head and he started (after me)--and this guy, he was about six feet one [inch], six feet two [inches] and possibly weighed about two [hundred]-(plus).

KT: And how tall, and how much did you weigh? How tall were you?

EG: I was about five [feet] (laughs) eight [inches] and weighed about 137 [pounds].

(Laughter)

EG: And he started at me. Now, there were two or three Blacks in there and they just turned and looked, but there was no way they (would) come to my (aid), but Collins, the man I worked for.

KT: The man you rode with in the . . .

EG: The one I rode with. He turns and says, "No Tom, you leave him alone." In other words, he came to my behalf. This was unusual. These are the sort of things that shaped (my life and caused me to be void of) prejudice. You see, I don't have prejudice. This is the only thing that's worthwhile of (that I have related) you,

(yet). I had to leave. But it was two or three people that (helped prevent this lack of prejudice). And they gave me something. There was another woman named [Mrs. Lucy] Pinson. I worked for (her) as a house boy. (Mr. Pinson) was a policeman, but she gave [EG] a certain amount (of respect), this was when I was (maybe) ten, eleven years old.

KT: What is that, a house boy?

EG: House boy is I did the cleaning, I did the laundry. House boy was, let's see, how you (describe a house boy). Well, you got maids. Back then they had young boys working the house. In other words, I cleaned the house.

KT: Would you cook for them also?

EG: (Yes). She was teaching me to cook. They taught you to cook, (clean house and do laundry). And they would take (you) into the home and pay (you) practically nothing, because they were paying me nothing, but you had food.

KT: Would they pay you a dollar a day, for example?

EG: No. I think, no. It wasn't that much, I doubt. It wasn't that much a week.

KT: So maybe just every time went, twenty-five cents or something?

EG: It's about that, something like that.

KT: And then, what would you--how much time, you would do a whole house and . . .

EG: Oh, yes.

KT: . . . they would give you twenty-five cents?

EG: Yeah. I would work practically all day, especially on the weekends. Now, there must have been some allowances for me going to school and that sort of thing. I was quite young. I remember that I was maybe eleven, twelve.

KT: And how far would that twenty-five cents go? When you got that twenty-five cents, how much, say, would your twenty-five cents buy? Would it buy groceries for three days or . . .

EG: I remember a loaf of bread was five cents. I guess I sort of--maybe it helped me with buying some of the things I (needed) for school. My mother was working, and this was during the depression years. The twenty-five cents probably (helped to purchase a) few items I needed at school that my mother couldn't give me.

KT: What kind of work did your mother do?

EG: My mother worked at a laundry. She was a presser for a while at the laundry and then later became, I think, the checker, or something like that in the laundry. She worked in the laundry practically all her life.

KT: Was it an integrated laundry?

EG: Integrated in a sense that you had both Whites and Blacks working in the laundry. But, I think that the Whites were not doing the same thing that my mother and other Negro ladies were doing (at the) laundry.

My father worked as a coal yard truck driver practically all of his life.

KT: And did a lot of Blacks work in the coal yard, too?

EG: If you were lucky to get a job as a truck driver. In those days, you were considered lucky, (driving a truck) was considered a good job. My mother and father divorced when I was nine. And this, I think, had quite an impact on my life, too.

KT: Was that about the time you quit school?

EG: Well, it must have been, let me see, at nine, I must have quit school about a couple three years after that.

KT: Was one of the reasons that you quit, not only that you had coasted and weren't into your study habits, but did you feel that you had to be responsible to your family? Did you want to help you mom or anything or it wasn't that?

EG: No, not so much that, I. . . . My mother needed help, but I don't recall it being one of the reasons. See, I don't think I was living with my mother at that time. I lived with an aunt. An aunt pretty much raised me. I lived with an aunt from the time my mother and father divorced until the time that I left Georgia. I left at nineteen.

KT: What was your aunt's name?

EG: Magnolia. We called her Totsy. And you could be her daughter.

KT: Taise?

EG: Totsy.

KT: Tatsy? How you spell that?

EG: T-O-T-S-Y.

KT: Oh, Totsy.

EG: Totsy.

KT: T-O-T-S-Y.

EG: Her name was Magnolia. You could be Totsy's daughter. (KT laughs.) Remind me very much of my aunt who was a very wonderful person. My aunt was a very wonderful person. Very fantastic person.

KT: So your teachers, were they all Black . . .

EG: Yes.

KT: . . . in your elementary school and high school?

EG: Yes. My teachers were all Black (in) elementary and high school.

KT: Did they teach you Black history?

EG: In high school we were taught Black history.

KT: And how much Black history did you learn?

EG: I'm trying to (think) if we studied it (through all of high school). I think, possibly at least two years. I'm sure we studied it for two years. At least two years of Black history.

KT: Well, that's unusual because, say in the North, that was supposed to be integrated and this, that, and the other, they wouldn't have had Black history, and even here in the '80's, a lot of people never get Black history. So that would be a strength of the old ways, in that people did learn some Black history.

EG: Integration is something that had to come about, but integration took away some things that were good. You see, it was only through the teachers that we learned (of our culture), the things that a person needs (to know of) background. . . . Those teachers took a greater interest in us (above and beyond) what they were paid for. They did more. They taught us etiquette, they taught us values, they taught us moral values. You know, funny thing (even) now, I reflect on this, that high school students (today) think nothing of fighting. Once we entered high school, (we discontinued) this. I was a little fighter in elementary school. But when you reached high school, you didn't do this anymore. Somehow or another they instilled in you a certain pride, a certain something that says, "Look, you (are) above (this) now." They taught you values, they taught you the simple things (like) how to use a knife and fork, a lot of commonsense things that you need to have in order to get you through. Like, how to approach a person, like how to respect a person, how to respect a woman.

KT: But did they teach you separately? All the boys would learn and then all the girls would learn or they would teach you together, a boy walks on the outside, a boy holds the door open?

EG: We were taught together in high school. Now, we had Mrs. Parker, who pretty much took the girls under her wing and gave them, I guess, the little special things that girls are supposed to have. Then we had some of the male teachers, who gave the men the little special things that guys are supposed to (know). But jointly, Mrs. Parker gave us all the right things that you do in relationship with one another. When you started dating, the girls went to Mrs. Parker, and if you didn't date right, if you didn't do the right things, Mrs. Parker called you on the carpet for it. In other words, you went before her. If you, let's say, you abused one of the girls, Mrs. Parker talked to you.

KT: And that could be for something as simple as, what? If you didn't . . .

EG: Something as simple as possibly making a date and not keeping it. And you very definitely did not abuse the girls and you respected them. I don't know how, I think, that this was one of the things that we should go more into. I think, that this is something that we as an ethnic group should do. I think it should be done now.

KT: Yeah.

EG: . . . I think it should be done now. I think we should maybe set aside, a Saturday, and get our young people together and say, these are the values that you need, and start instilling in these people something that's very special. We lost it with integration. Periodically I go back to Athens, and I'm forever thankful. Do you know people used to come to Athens, a visitor--if somebody didn't take (them) into their home, (they would) have nowhere to stay because there was definitely no hotels. You could not go to the White hotels. I say a blessing to Martin Luther King whenever I'm down South, I walk into a hotel and make reservations. I say, "Okay, I'm Ernest Golden. I want a room for X number of days.

I'd go to Atlanta and I don't worry about, "Hey, I gotta go and find a colored fountain to drink [from]." I don't have to worry about finding a restroom, a colored restroom. I don't have to worry about saying, "Where can I go and get something to eat here." Martin Luther King did. . . . See, that's one way I can possibly answer the things that disturbed me when I was growing up, by looking at the things that other people accept. You see, other people take these things for granted when they go South. I don't take them for granted. I took my family back there, okay, my kids, my wife and everything. My children, oh, I guess my oldest boy [Bruce] was fourteen, twelve to fourteen. And this was in nineteen. . . . This was after Martin Luther King thing, possibly in late '60s, right? I didn't have to worry about--my children just walked in there, my wife walked through, you know, walking through the terminal in Atlanta. To me, it was a special thing because, I couldn't have done it when I grew up. When I was my son's age.

KT: Even for me when I was in high school, everything was segregated,

just like you say. The police were there to attack, you know, there was a possibility of violence at every town, so I have the same appreciation that you do, yeah.

EG: Yeah, yeah. This, I think, is the greatest way for me to explain what I was faced with and what I was aware of. You see, I often say people thought we coined the phrase brainwashing when we went to Vietnam, no. We were brainwashed in the South. I was, most of the people were brainwashed and, I guess, one of the greatest things that (I had going for me was) that I could not accept the brainwashing. I did not accept it. And this is why some of us said, "Look, the minute I got out of high school, the minute I graduated, I was ready to leave." I left Athens. I graduated on the 11th of June, and on the 15th of June, I was on a bus with nothing in my pockets, hardly. But (the desire) to get out of Athens, I left.

KT: And where did you go?

EG: I went to Atlantic City.

KT: Uh huh. So you went North?

EG: (Yes).

KT: You went North.

EG: Everybody went North if they had anything. Some others accepted. They accepted brainwashing. In other words, this is the way life is supposed to be, there was nothing else there. There was no change in sight. Even those who rebelled were called, "Hey, he's crazy." He was called crazy by the Whites if he even . . .

KT: Crazy nigger, yeah.

EG: Yeah, crazy nigger, right? And the others would say, "Don't make it bad for us," okay. Because the brainwashing was such a power. This is the way life is. This is the way we (are) supposed to be, so don't upset the apple cart. You're going to make it bad for everybody. This was the crazy nigger, okay. Now, he had to get out of town. In other words, you leave. The Whites wanted him out of town because they was scared of him. And the Blacks wanted him out of town because they were scared he (would make the situation worse), he was going to change the situation, you know. I was not the crazy nigger to the point where I was going to--I did do a couple things once or twice, though, as a child. And I could have been--I scared myself one time.

KT: What did you do?

EG: I must have been eight, nine, ten years old. We would have to go--I lived on Second Street where my aunt lived. And the store we went to was (past) First Street, on Broad Street, which was a block down.

And at Broad Street, River Street and First Street, there was a factory. And they had some White children, because this was factory town. First Street was factory town, . . .

KT: What kind of things and what did they do in the factories?

EG: They--textile.

KT: Okay.

EG: Textile. And First Street, from River Street all the way up, oh, for about four or five blocks, I guess, was White. Second Street was Black, okay. But, now, First Street was where the factory workers were. And they had some of the children, I suppose it must have been teenagers, or something like that. And this must have been on a Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening, early evening, and I was going with one or two of the smaller children from the neighborhood where I (lived), to get kerosene. And as we were passing by, these kids started picking on some of the smaller (children with me), picking on us. And the jug I had to get the kerosene in was a glass gallon bottle with a handle, and (one of them) started toward a child, I swung the bottle at his head. If I had hit him, I would have given him a concussion. And I was scared, after I'd done it. I was scared because if I hit that kid, they would have put me underneath (the jail), they would have lynched me.

KT: Did they let you go? I mean, did . . .

EG: I didn't hit him.

KT: . . . I know. And then did they let you pass . . .

EG: Yeah, somehow or another, we went on. It's just that I scared the living hell out of myself. If I . . .

KT: In other words, it was like guerrilla tactics. You'd be walking, and then people would just appear out of nowhere and kind of taunt you or whatever, and then they would just fade back in, and then you just keep going?

EG: Let's say that this factory had a front lawn that was green and well-kept, and this was a playground for them. The Whites would come and play in this area, and that bordered the street where we had to walk. So they were there playing, (and this) was the only way we could go, we had only one way to get to the store. Now, there was no excuse for not going to the store. We couldn't go back and offer excuses, [such as] "Well look, they got White kids playing down there." Well, what are we going to do? You gotta go. So, when you were walking by, this was the time that they stopped their other games and decide, "Hey, this is the time to attack (chuckles), to attack a nigger," okay. So, all the other games, they may have been playing baseball, or they may have been playing any [game], anything. But they stopped at this point and decided, "Hey, look,

here's a more interesting game, so let's play this game for a while." And that is to beat up a Negro kid. The children, I guess, we were on par with them, but these were older kids, and the children I had with me were younger. So, it wasn't a fair game. It was an unfair game. Yeah. This is the one time I frightened myself. But, all in all, I guess we were brainwashed and I had to leave and I am glad I left.

(Laughter)

KT: Let me go back, a couple of things. Wait now, where was that? When did you have your first encounter with Whites and when did you have a sense that there was a difference between Blacks and Whites, in terms of how it was viewed by society or whatever. How did this consciousness come to you? How old were you?

EG: Oh.

KT: Do you remember? Your early. . . .

EG: The first encounter? The first encounters were not--I must have been four. This was with my grandfather, and they were not, at four or five years old, not negative, in a sense. My grandfather was sharecropping.

KT: What is that, sharecropping?

EG: Sharecropping is, he had from the White owner, a farm. How many acres was involved in it, I don't recall. It must have near a 100 acres. He was growing cotton. And because of the use of the land, 50 percent of what he grew, he turned over to the White owner. My grandfather was successful as a farmer. And so, my first contact with Whites, I guess, was at that time, but not in a negative sense. I think it was, oh, yes, but there were some other [negative] things happened about the same time. We lived, oh, a few, maybe a mile or so from the stores. And I think that when we went to the stores [there were Whites], these were almost like general stores.

KT: So at four, what does that mean? That means that if you went to buy candy or went to buy something for your mom, what would that mean, in terms, how would it [play] itself out?

EG: That means that I would have to know [about the dangers posed by Whites]. At this time, at four years old, I would usually go, if I was going to the store, I would go with an older person, usually my uncles. Maybe I was protected in a sense because of uncles and aunts, they protected me. But I was aware that they had to walk a certain line in order to keep the peace, that if they overstepped these boundaries, that somehow or another, problems would come about. Now at four years old, you're not, you're not that aware of it. You just--it's somewhere in your mind, you just realize it, "Hey, look, something here is a little different." When you walk up to the counter, there was. . . . In other words, if a White man was

there--let's say you both came at the same time--or a White person, they had priority over you.

KT: But were there words that were used by your uncles and aunts and mother and dad and grandmother or whatever that said, you have to wait or you have to step aside or you cannot look them in the eye, or was it that you learned it through . . .

EG: That's one thing. That's one thing about looking them in the eye, too. No, you couldn't look a White woman in the eyes, that's one of the things. Oh, that's a tough question. And yet it's so involved, so much into something. At that age, I'm not so certain that I was aware of that fine distinction. However, later, it's a bit later, that I became aware of what was happening as far as the two races were concerned. And this was when one of the people, one of the White kids we used to play with. We played with him up until the time he (reached) twelve years old and entered high school, and that dividing line (became) very pronounced at that time. It came very pronounced that we had to say "mister" to him, I think, at twelve years old. We used to play with him because, you know I told you about this house boy thing? I was one. I was working for this kid's sister and then my uncle was working for his other sister. His name was Harry Kirk. And Harry and I, and Inus, my uncle, used to all play together until he reached high school age, about twelve years old or something, and somehow or another, that all stopped. And the relationship was severed. And I don't know how it came about, I'm not sure how it came about, but all of a sudden the kid you've been playing with all along as just another kid, now became somebody you had to look up to and, you couldn't call him by his first name anymore.

KT: Who told you this? Did he tell you that or did his parents? Or did you . . .

EG: I'll be darned, if I know. Not my parents. It definitely didn't come from our side. It must have come from their side or maybe come from him, or his attitude, or the way he just sort of cut our relationship. But the relationship was severed. This was one that sort of stayed with me for some time.

KT: Did it hurt your feelings?

EG: Yeah. It hurts now, because, I think, we all had something, we sort of liked each other. That was a very--we were all friends. Very good friends. I mean, we rough-and-tumbled together like kids would. But this happened, it happened all around, and all around the neighborhood that we were in. And I don't know why. It was almost an undeclared thing. I don't know who brought, I don't know where it came from. I think it was the kid's attitude. His parents evidently--the White kids' parents must have brought them in at some stage of life, "Okay, fine, you can no longer play with this little Black kid anymore because you are now moving into another realm of society and what you've been doing, up till now, is no longer

acceptable." We only got it by the change in his attitude, that person's attitude toward us. And up until that time, (both) boys and the girls, we all played (together), Black boys and White boys, and everything, all played together, and without any restrictions.

KT: But how would you play together? I mean, your neighborhood were segregated, were they not?

EG: Not all the time. Now, remember the time that we are talking about, remember, I was a house boy at a very early age.

KT: House boy, that's right, okay. So you would be there at the house.

EG: Okay. I was a kid. I was a kid and I was playing with all these kids all around in the neighborhood as I was in a White neighborhood, okay? I've said I was a house boy (at) something like ten, eleven years old. So what was it that a ten-year-old child (did), what (does an) eleven-year-old child do? He played like any other eleven-year-old child does. And he plays with the White kids. Some were younger (tape inaudible) than I. Now, the lady I was working for, had two girls. And we all played together. And I think I left before they reached the age where they had to say, "Okay, fine," to cut it, to sever it. So we just played, just kids. Their uncle was the one that cut the relationship. It was just severed.

KT: What about violence? Were you aware of any violence White against Black violence? Accept the possibility of violence with the policemen as you were growing up? Was there anything of a violent nature that made you sort of . . .

EG: Yeah. One comes to mind right away, the minute you mentioned it. Athens had a lot of small towns within, let's say, the proximity of maybe twenty miles or so. I'm trying to remember the name of this little town. But somehow or another, there was a lynching. They took this man, took this Black man, and tied his feet and attached a rope to the back of a car and dragged him, I don't know how far.

KT: What had he done?

EG: I don't know. He may have been accused of rape. I say "accused." The Blacks would (only) talk about it in whispers, and the Whites wouldn't talk about it when you were around. And I was pretty young at that time. That was one that sticks in my mind today.

KT: And it just happened. No one was ever brought to trial or anything?

EG: Oh, no, there was no such thing about bringing anybody to trial. Who did it, I don't know. In other words, there was a [Ku Klux] Klan element, around. Now, this is the only one that comes to mind right now, okay, just bang, just comes right there. There was violence all over the place. You know. The police beat up my father as far as that's concerned.

KT: What did they beat him up for doing?

EG: My father was always bootlegging. He worked and he bootlegged in order to make ends meet, I guess.

KT: Did a lot of Blacks bootleg?

EG: Yeah, often.

KT: And they would do it at home and just sell it to their friends?

EG: Yeah. They all, at almost every house. They were bootlegging in the house(s). All around the neighborhood.

KT: So that was like since the jobs weren't open, that was a way to make ends meet . . .

EG: This was a way to make additional income.

KT: Was this during the prohibition period or. . . .

EG: Yeah. Because remember, that county in which--Clarke County, Georgia, where Athens was located was a dry county up until I went back, in the 1970's.

KT: My county was the same, Macon County in Alabama. It was dry until the '70s.

EG: Okay, until the '70s.

KT: And there was the same thing. There was bootlegging, there was the same thing. Very similar.

EG: Yeah, yeah. So Athens was dry and so there was no. . . . No, it was a dry county.

KT: Let me stop the tape and turn it over. We'll stop here and turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

KT: . . . [Continuing] about violence because obviously that kind of coercion either violent, actual violent or undertones of it, must have been a determining factor that as a four-year-old, you may not have been actually aware of thinking of your youngest years, but that slowly it must have filtered into your consciousness, as you said before, something might happen, you had this feeling that something might happen.

EG: It was about the. . . . I don't know. Maybe I blank out some of the more unpleasant things. I don't know. That was common. Some of this stuff was so much a part of life that you don't call it violence at (the) time. There was no such--I don't recall ever being in any sort of riots or anything because Blacks didn't riot around that part of town. There was no such things as riots. Flare-ups every once in a while, one on one, whenever you found a Black man, the one that's supposed to be crazy, crazy nigger, once in a while would do something. Some of the things that's called violence now was a way of life. And that was most of it, seemingly, was done by the police. They had the right to do almost anything they wanted to do to Black people around that part of the country. And yet, a lot of it was like I said. Athens being what it was, was supposed to have been a cut above the rest of the towns around. I think some of the stuff that may have happened in a lot of cases were the outlying towns, other than just the acceptable ones. And most of the stuff--was there any major things in Athens that I recall other than. . . . And that one, when I say where they dragged this man around, was quite early in my life. That, I can't think of anything other than plain street fights that somebody got beat up, you got beat up if you were walking down the sidewalk. Heck, you'd got beat up if you were alone.

KT: Yeah, but that was racial?

EG: Yes.

KT: Okay.

EG: In other words, funny thing about it, if that was the one on one, one Black man and a White man walking down the street together, there was no confrontation. If there was two White men and one Black, you might have a fight. If that was one Black man and a kid, I mean if there was one White man and a kid, you might have a fight, a confrontation. If that was one White man and maybe a woman walking down the street, you may have had a confrontation. If you had two or more White people and one of any of the others, you had a confrontation. This was almost the way of life, so you prepared to get the heck out of the way when you saw it coming. You got away from it.

KT: You mentioned that Jewish and Catholics and Blacks were kind of outcasts. Why would it be that the Jewish people and the Catholics people were also outcasts as well as the Blacks.

EG: I think the Catholics, because of the Catholics' philosophy, they didn't go along with the general trend of segregation down there. You see, the Catholic church, somehow or another, didn't go totally with southern segregation.

KT: Well, now, how do you mean this? What do you mean? How were they any different from anyone else?

EG: In other words, I'm almost certain that they. . . . I don't recall anyone going to a Catholic school. But seemingly to me, that the Catholics were open to Blacks. Now, it was against the law for you to integrate, go to an integrated school or a church. But, somehow or another, I got the impression that Catholics didn't go along with the program, I don't know.

KT: Well, you know, I went to a Catholic school for two years myself. And all the teachers, the nuns, all the teachers were White.

EG: In the South?

KT: In Alabama.

EG: Okay.

KT: All the teachers were Whites, nuns. And then, this is in Alabama. Then, the church, the priests were White.

EG: Okay.

KT: But all the congregation was . . .

EG: Was integrated?

KT: . . . Black. And all the students were Black. So maybe in that sense, I can see what you mean in that they were Whites that taught in Black schools and did in a Black church.

EG: Well, Catholics just didn't seem--I don't recall knowing any Catholic myself. I just know the people I work for, somehow or another, were anti-Catholic. And the Jews, I don't know why, the Jews. The Jews had the money. The Jews had the businesses, but there was just something that the southern Whites didn't--were prejudiced against Jews.

KT: Well, you know, I heard this thing about a Semite is a mixed blood anyway, the Semites were mixed from the southern Europeans and the northern Africans. And it might be that carryover that they are not pure White people but also . . .

EG: Well, they weren't considered White. Jews weren't considered White. They were considered Jews.

KT: Yeah, just their own separate group.

EG: Yeah. We had Italians in town, a few, very few, who were in business. They weren't considered White, they just weren't considered Black. There was one Chinese restaurant in town, and he wasn't considered anything. I don't know what category he fell into, but he did business downtown in downtown Athens. Going back to your other question, I don't know how to answer that anymore. It must be when I leave here, and possibly sometime tomorrow, someone

will, "Hey, you remember this," there was this incident or there were these incidents. The violence that existed, I suppose, if any at all, was the type of things we had to go through as kids. Just trying to get home from school, trying to get to from one point, from point A to point B. You had to fight if you, or either run, so what do you call that? I mean, you know. Funny sort of thing, I don't know, I guess that's just. . . . I don't know.

KT: How many Jewish people lived in Athens? Was it a sizeable minority?

EG: I would say a sizeable one. I would say a sizeable one. But they played it very low key.

KT: Did they go to White schools or Black schools?

EG: No, they must have gone, they went to White schools because they and Catholic both all went to White school. Only somebody that went to Black schools were Blacks. If anyone else was in those towns, they went to school, they went to White schools.

KT: Even the Chinese?

EG: If they went to school there. The University of Georgia may have had some non-Whites on its campus. They didn't have any Blacks on its campus, they may have had some non-Whites. That's another thing that came about that disturbed me later on in life, is that non-Blacks had a status that was higher than Blacks even in places where we were the--it was our hometown, but we didn't have the rights that some the other non-Whites had, and they weren't White nor Black. They may not have had, they may have not been segregated in a sense that we were, but they were a cut, they were placed a step above us.

KT: Was there public transportation there?

EG: Off and on. But at the time that we're talking about, I think, just prior to my leaving, they may have had a five-cent bus. There was bus transportation and they charged five cents, a public bus. I think then it wasn't subsidized, or it didn't pay for itself, so it was finally phased out. Looks to me at some time or another, there must have been trolley cars in Athens.

KT: Could Blacks ride them?

EG: In the back. If you got on, you had to go to the back. Yeah, you could ride it.

KT: Did Blacks own property?

EG: Yeah. Yes.

KT: Could they live anywhere they wanted to?

EG: No. There was no such thing as living wherever you wanted to. A lot of the land, believe it or not--my father told me about this later on, though--some of the land that my grandfather had been sharecropping had been owned at one time by a Black man, and he must have had thousands of acres.

KT: I wonder how he got it?

EG: Somewhere, I don't know whether it came--funny thing, that part of the country, around Athens, around Georgia, they had a lot of Blacks that owned a lot of land. I mean vast . . .

KT: Do you think they got it from ex-slave--from slave masters?

EG: I think some must have come down from that and some of it must have been inherited.

KT: The Civil War, maybe . . .

EG: I think some of it came after the Civil War, the Reconstruction [Period]. Some may have been handed down, even inherited from White parents. I think some of it came down--but I mean, vast, vast plots of land, not a few acres, but thousands of acres. And gradually they lost it.

KT: Due to land tax, and . . .

EG: Due to, I think, to land tax, through sharecropping, through not having the knowledge, through bookkeeping, and stuff like that. They lost it. In other words, it became. . . . They taxed it and somebody picked it up. Not being educated, I think, they lost it. But I think the land that my grandfather had been sharecropping, one time had been owned by some Black people. Because my father, when he came (to Athens), he said he was working for a Black man. And it seemed to be in the same area that I grew up in.

KT: What about communications? Newspapers or . . .

EG: None. There was none. I think we had, sometime or another, I recall a man delivering the Pittsburgh Courier.

KT: Yeah. The Pittsburgh Courier.

EG: Pittsburgh Courier.

KT: That's in Athens?

EG: Yeah.

KT: Hm hmm. Did you get it on a regular basis or it was just . . .

EG: It was a regular basis because you subscribed, he would come out. How we got it, I don't know. But he would come and he

would--whether you subscribed to it or whether he came around and you bought it, you know, depending on your degree of interest. I'm sure it wasn't a regular subscription. Someone in the neighborhood may have subscribed to it. But I think primarily he would bring around, I don't know, I've forgotten the man's name.

KT: And how did people react to that? A Black newspaper?

EG: I don't really recall. I don't really recall. In a positive sense, I'm sure. I don't recall, even at that time, the time this was happening, I was in elementary school.

KT: So you don't recall up until you graduated from high school reading a Black newspaper?

EG: No.

KT: Or reading about . . .

EG: No, no.

KT: Would you read about Black people in the newspaper, in the White newspaper?

EG: No.

KT: In other words, the White newspaper didn't have anything about Black people?

EG: Not of a positive nature. None that I know of. No, I don't even recall ever reading anything about Black people in the newspaper. I'm trying to see even in high school, was anything in there. . . . (Banner) Herald was a local paper. In high school, did I read anything? I may have read something at one time about the principal of Athens High and Industrial School, Professor Brown, but I don't recall the article. I think he did get an article in the paper. What it was about, I really don't know.

KT: What about music? Did you folks listen to music, or have parties, or was there live music around?

EG: There was small groups. My uncles provided some of the musical entertainment. Most of the entertainment was--we're going back to like fish fries, barbecues and stuff like that, right. And there was the piano player. My uncle was quite good at it. Both my uncles were good at this sort of thing.

KT: How did they learn?

EG: By ear.

KT: By ear.

EG: My (mother's) family was quite musical. And I recall at a very early age that my grandfather used to play a juice [i.e., means Jew's harp] harp.

KT: What is that?

EG: You ever seen a juice harp?

KT: Mm mmm. What is that?

EG: Juice harp is a little musical instrument that you place on your (lips). It's about, and it looks like, it's shaped something like a what, what's it shaped like? It's sort of oval shape, it's about the size of your mouth, then you pick and you blow through it, and it makes a sound.

KT: Is it shaped like a harmonica?

EG: No.

KT: Is it like a kazoo?

EG: It's not shaped like a--huh?

KT: Is it like a kazoo?

EG: It's like a small, like a small lyre, isn't a lyre an instrument? It's a little instrument that's round. It's oval in shape and about three-quarters of an inch or inch in diameter, with a little bar running through it, and you pluck the bar and blow, open it by shaping--you change the tones (with) your mouth, your lips, open and closing changes the tones.

KT: Wait now, and it has a string on it, too?

EG: No, no, no string. It's oval-shaped, looked like. You know an eye? If you ever draw the eye, the person's eye, when you graphically draw it? Looks like that, but can you figure that about an inch in diameter and running through it there's a little bar that you pluck with your finger.

KT: And what was it called?

EG: Juice harp.

KT: Juice harp?

EG: Hm hmm. Made interesting, interesting sounds. Seemingly from an early age, there was either an organ, and this was one of those pedal things. You've seen an organ you pedal with your feet?

KT: Yeah.

EG: Okay, that was always in my grandparents' (house). From very early days, I remember seeing the organ. They all to some degree, all my uncles and my aunts, played it. The outcome of that was that they, somehow or another, were the musicians around town or some of the musicians around town. Periodically there would be some bands from out of town, but this was later on in life when I grew up, in high school, bands from out of town would come into town. Radio stations played primarily country and western. I do recall Ink Spots. I do recall the Ink Spots were quite popular.

KT: On the White station?

EG: Yeah. On the White stations. The Mills Brothers, Ella Fitzgerald, when she first came out with "Tisket-A-Tasket." She was one of the musicians. Cab Calloway, Duke [Ellington]. These, they had the "Great White Way" that was broadcast out of [New York], I suppose, Apollo Theater, somewhere in New York. And the radio station would pick it up and we . . .

KT: The "Great White Way"?

EG: Yeah. Somewhere in New York. The "Great White Way," because Cab Calloway was coming in from the "Great White Way" somewhere in New York. [New York City's Broadway was formerly known as the Great White Way.] Primarily though, I think, Athens had, more or less, remember I keep on going back to it that here you have a little progressive town and you have some progressive people and every once in a while they would come out with some unique ideas that were a little bit ahead of the crowd. And I think they tried to do some things that was a little bit different. So, I think we had some of the--exposed to some entertainment. No blues, which is my favorite. Blues, you didn't have.

KT: You didn't have blues?

EG: Not on the radio stations. You got it. You could buy it.

KT: Oh, you could buy records.

EG: Oh, yeah. You could. This was, I cut my teeth on blues. Bessie Smith, all that sort of stuff. (Lonnie) Johnson, these people I grew up with in the home, and some of the better times, these were some of the good times, listening to all this sort of stuff. But the music that came on the radio was sort of, a lot of country and western. And I think a lot of us got into country and western music. Blacks, I think, started listening to country and western because the only thing you hear, you hear so much. But then every once in while a little later on in life, they would bring bands from out of town to play downtown. We had the Hot Corner, the Knights of Pythian Hall that someone used to promote bands. Not only the Knights of Pythian were . . .

KT: What is that, the Knights of Pythian? Was that like . . .

EG: Knights of Pythian is almost like a Masonic lodge, but I don't know, where that--who the members were, I don't recall.

KT: Were they kind of pillars in the community though, the Knights of Pythians?

EG: They must have been because they had a couple of doctors (as members). I was on the outer edges of Black society down there. Because my people weren't--my people were poor. But this was downtown Athens.

KT: When you say, though, that your people were poor, does that mean that you didn't have shoes and socks and shirts and pants to wear or you just didn't have extra shoes and socks and shirts to wear.

EG: That means that I had, some of the time, shoes with holes in them. Not enough food, not enough string to tie the shoes that were not adequate. In other words, you put newspaper in your shoes in order to keep your feet off the ground. (These) was some of the rough years. This is during. . . . That supposed--was right after my father left. And my mother was pretty much on her own, trying to raise two children, earning hardly nothing, and a single, what do you call it . . .

KT: Single parent . . .

EG: Single parent. And then there were a lot of times when I didn't have food, I went to school without food.

KT: Without breakfast?

EG: Without breakfast.

KT: And then, you would have lunch at school?

EG: No, I don't know what happened. And I sometimes look back on that (period) because they had, there was some sort of food program at the school. And we're talking elementary school.

KT: Hm hmm. Again, a progressive element in that there was a food program.

EG: There was food program for those kids who--my people didn't have anything. They all worked. And I suppose because they worked and there was a certain pride in them, they didn't consider themselves--they always considered there was somebody who was worse off than they were, okay, because they had jobs. But, looking back, they had jobs, but jobs weren't paying anything. And I was starving. And either didn't qualify for the food programs because they had--I remember, now, the smell of that soup at lunch time, that I didn't qualify for. And why I didn't qualify, well, maybe I didn't apply for it because it was, what you'd call, welfare in a sense?

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: And we would not consider--there was no way we were going to consider saying we were on welfare. So therefore, I didn't get any of that food, and I possibly should have. Maybe I grew up with a little more pride than was practical because I could have used the nourishment that food had, and come home and have, maybe, scraped together enough to bake some bread or just a piece of bread or nothing else to go with it. I think I was sort of overdoing a good thing. My mom did the best she could but. . . .

KT: Do you think that's why you went and lived with your grandparents? Did you eat better once you went over there?

EG: Well, the time I lived with my grandparents was before things got bad. See, I lived with my grandparents until I was, oh, five, five years or so, five years old, and then my parents moved into town. And then it was at the time that I was nine, that they (my parents) separated. So up until nine years old, everything was smooth. Everything was good. Other than living in the South, and up till nine years old, heck, things weren't so bad living in the South when you're nine years old. You don't really realize what you're missing, you don't really realize what's out there. So up until then, I didn't go hungry, I had everything that I needed, I guess. And the years when I was living with my grandparents were really beautiful years, because they grew everything they needed. They grew all the food. They grew an abundance of food. But, it was [worse] between the years of, I say, nine, when I was nine years old, it must have been about five years or so.

KT: So from nine until you were about fourteen?

EG: About fourteen.

KT: And that was in the depression period? That was in the '30s more or less?

EG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

KT: And then you were just pretty constantly hungry? And then your brothers and sisters, they were also hungry? Were they there with you?

EG: They were worse than I was because I was living with my aunt, half--some of the time. You see, because, we lived, I suppose. My mother and I lived in the same house even after my father and mother got divorced. And my uncle, who was a good provider, he and my aunt were still together and they took me as their oldest child, oldest son, so I was a member of that household. So it wasn't--I had it better than my brother and my sister.

KT: And they were hungry? Would all say, "Gee, I sure am hungry. I want something to eat," or you wouldn't say . . .

EG: No. You just felt it. If you looked at me. My mother knew it, but she didn't try to make it any rougher than what it was, okay. And there were times when there was no [coal] and you were cold. And there were times when you slept, went to bed with no food and you were cold.

KT: And would you bunch up together so that you could stay warm?

EG: Well, my brother and I slept in the same bed together.

KT: So then finally, after all of this was all over and you went to high school and you graduated, you graduated?

EG: Yes, I graduated.

KT: You said, "I'm out of here," and you went North.

EG: Uh huh.

KT: You got out of the South and you went North. Did you know where you were going? Did you have a friend to where you were going?

EG: A friend of mine, (there) was a very good friend, (there) was a very close friend of mine, man named Milton Jordan who's in Washington D. C. He and I came to Hawai'i together, incidentally, but he had gone to Atlantic City the year before. And when we got out of high school, we graduated together, and he and I left. And we went to Atlantic City and stayed for three months. We came and went, sort of travelled back and forth by bus.

KT: What were you doing for money? Would you work?

EG: We would go to work at a restaurant because once you went to work at a restaurant--you didn't leave with money--but then if you went to work in a restaurant, the first thing you did was eat, okay. So, we got a job in a restaurant, and usually [as] a busboy. Atlantic City (hotels and restaurants) start hiring about the end of May for their summer rush. Atlantic City was a boomtown from June through September, and then in September, (the) place closed up so you'd leave. And so I did this as soon as I came out of high school, went to Atlantic City. And I left Atlantic City--we left in September and went back to Athens and from Athens, we went to New Orleans for a couple of months, no, a couple of weeks or so. And this was in, yeah, we went to work at a hotel down there. That's the other thing I was telling you about. At that time, this must have been early '41--'41, '42--but there was a ship that sunk somewhere in the gulf, and there was a lot of Indians from India who was on (the) ship. And at this hotel, the Jung Hotel in New Orleans on Canal Street, and we could only come in the back door okay. But they put these people in the hotel.

KT: The Indians?

EG: The Indians.

KT: That had been on the ship?

EG: Yeah.

KT: That were just as dark in color . . .

EG: Yeah.

KT: . . . as you were?

EG: Yes, okay go ahead, now you got the whole bloody picture, right? Now I'm wondering, what is wrong with this (chuckles) with this bloody place. Here I am supporting you people morally, spiritually, everything else, backing you up, protecting you and loving you and all of a sudden, this is one thing about the White people, and all of a sudden, you bring somebody [from] outside and you let them do things that you wouldn't let me do. How come? Why do you do this?

KT: So this was kind of seeing the discrepancies or the paradoxes and beginning to really seriously question . . .

EG: This is why, yes, very definitely so, very definitely so. It must have come, now it came to the analytical stage. In other words, prior to that was, "Hey, look, it's just wrong and I"--no, not so much it's just wrong, it's just that I can't live with this. Something says, "I cannot exist with this." This was what [was] in the back of my mind for all the time I'm in Athens, through elementary school, through high school, and that sort of stuff. Something is not right and I've gotta get away from it, okay. But you don't put it in (to words). Okay, by this time, though, you now have left, not very long because it's all within a few months, but you start to analyze, you start looking at it, you start weighing it, you analyze it.

KT: Your brain computer starts to happen.

EG: Yes, you start (thinking), how come? Okay, but this is what happened. Anyway, we were in New Orleans a short time. Actually we were leaving New Orleans, going back to Athens and we picked up, on the bus, we picked up a magazine that says jobs, civil service jobs in Bermuda--I almost went to Bermuda. And we went to Atlanta to apply for (the) job, a civil service job in Bermuda. And the jobs were paying seventy-five cents an hour. Seventy-five cents an hour at that time was a lot of money. We would have gone, so we applied. They said, "Well, there's no more jobs in Bermuda, but you can go to Pearl Harbor." Go to Pearl Harbor, right?

We had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. I had watched Dorothy Lamour movies, Ray Milland movies, and I knew the South Pacific was somewhere on this planet. (KT chuckles.) And we loved the South Pacific, but we didn't have (any) idea that Pearl Harbor was in the

South Pacific. But seventy-five cents an hour, we would have gone to west hell and back. So we said, "Okay, fine, let's go to Pearl Harbor." And we signed up for it, we stayed in Athens a couple days or so, and then went to Philadelphia.

KT: Why to Philadelphia?

EG: It wasn't in Athens. (Laughs) It wasn't Georgia.

KT: So you heard about a job there, or you just decided, "Oh, well let's go to [the North]."

EG: Let's go somewhere where, you know, we can get a job. We'll go somewhere and (find) a job, I don't know. So we, heck, got the bloody bus [and] went on to . . .

KT: Was it cheap?

EG: The bus. From Athens to Philadelphia must have been less than fifteen dollars. Had to be less than fifteen dollars, because I recall having fifteen dollars to start out with. (Chuckles) So it may have been much less than that. And you sit up, you know, you rode coach. And we arrived in Philadelphia and in no time got a job in a restaurant, okay. So you eat. That's the first thing you do. Once you get the job, then you go out and find a place to stay.

KT: And how do you find a place to stay?

EG: Well, you inquire around the town there, inquire from people . . .

KT: Another pocket of the Black community again?

EG: Oh, yes.

KT: You get there and you get your job and then you find out where . . .

EG: People in the hotel, and the guys working, you know, in other words, guys working (in the) hotel, yeah. And somebody's going to say, "I know where you can get a room over here," and, you know, you move in like that. So we were there from October to December and then word came, the papers came for us to go to Pearl Harbor.

KT: You had sent your address back down to where they could reach you and all that.

EG: Well, what it was, is--and that's an interesting thing, too. Milton, my friend, Milton Jordan, and I came here together. He was a buddy to me all through high school, very close friends, very close. He evidently gave his address for Philadelphia. Anyway, his papers were forwarded to him. So mine went to Athens. You know, funny thing happened during the time I was (in Philadelphia)--I tried to join, I went down, this is on December 19, and I went to join the air force, volunteer for the air force.

KT: In Philadelphia or so--in Philadelphia.

EG: In Philadelphia. And they told me that there was no openings--I was nineteen--(and I was told that) I was going to be drafted in January, anyway, so why don't I just wait to be drafted. In other words, they didn't want me in the air force.

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: They definitely, you know, I would have joined. Do you know I've tried to join the service several times. I've never (had) military service.

KT: Isn't that something? And prime age during the time of the war?

EG: One-A. Over here I was a A-1, or 1-A.

KT: One-A.

EG: Physically, 1-A. Now, and I was prime.

KT: Why do you think . . .

EG: Prejudice. They didn't want me.

KT: They didn't want any more Black . . .

EG: The branch of service that I wanted to get into was not open to Blacks. Now there were no such thing as Blacks going in the air force. Forget it. Back in 1942, no. I don't know how any Blacks got into the air force I think. I think Tuskegee [Institute]. Tuskegee must have had (the) air force, right?

KT: College. Yeah. Uh huh. They did.

EG: They did. But now . . .

KT: I think you had to go through college and be a commissioned whatever, whatever . . .

EG: Yeah.

KT: . . . you had to get it through school.

EG: Yeah, but the average Black could not get in.

KT: What about the navy? Was the navy open?

EG: I didn't try at that time. I didn't try the navy at that time. I don't know. The navy just didn't appeal to me.

KT: But only the army, essentially. What about the marines? I don't think the marines were.

EG: Marines weren't taking any Blacks. When I came over here, I was going to join the paratroopers. I was even trying to--over here, after I'd been over here for a period of time--and I was trying to get into the Officer's Candidate School and went down to Aloha Tower and passed the exam with a pretty high grade. But the guy told me, "Look, you gotta go to Texas in order to--you gotta pay your way to Texas and then enroll in the school over there. We won't take you here."

KT: Oh, they had a school here, but they wouldn't take you?

EG: If they had one here, it wasn't open to me. I had to go to Texas in order to get into (the Officer's Candidate School). But going back to December of 1942, I'd gone down to the local draft board or the recruiting office and tried to get into the air force and they told me, no, I couldn't do it. So, (when) I got back to the apartment the same day and Milton had gotten his papers, so he says, "Hey, look, yours must be somewhere, so let's go to Athens and pick yours up too." And we're on our way to Pearl Harbor.

KT: Just like you'd go around the block.

EG: Yes. So, we had it, we split and came on to Athens and mine were there.

KT: And you would be saving your money all along when you'd be working or you would spend it?

EG: I'd send my mother some.

KT: You would send your mom, even though you weren't living at home?

EG: Yeah. I'd send my mother some. Spend whatever, you know, buy some clothes, and stuff like that. I wasn't saving that much money. Because, I don't know, you'd spend a little bit, but I didn't save anything on it.

KT: So you went to Athens and got your papers?

EG: Mm hmm.

KT: And then what did you folks do?

EG: We had our travel orders. We were civil service employees at that time, and you travelled almost as if you were military. You had the same benefits as far as (accommodations on) trains were concerned. I had a berth and the only thing is that you got paid per diem. Your ticket and everything was paid for. But your per diem, all your food and everything like that, you didn't get that until you got here. So I arrived on--no, wait. I may be lying now. We went through California, right. We went to Vallejo, California and somewhere around Mare Island, there's a shipyard there in California. We worked there waiting for transportation to come to

Hawai'i. I didn't have any--no, I had my little money in my pocket. Didn't have very much to start with. (And) I lost it or somebody clipped me. So I came from Georgia to California on three dollars.

KT: Oh, my goodness.

EG: And on a train.

KT: So you had to eat something.

EG: I was pretty hungry. (KT laughs) I was rather hungry.

KT: What is it, about a five--no, three-day [trip].

EG: (Laughs) That's close. It's not overnight. Kathryn, that's kind of a long trip.

KT: Yeah, probably five days, huh.

EG: It's probably closer to five days.

KT: Yeah.

EG: I had first-class accommodations.

KT: Couldn't eat.

EG: But no, couldn't eat. I think the conductor, somebody, the conductor or somebody on the train gave me some of his food. I guess because I looked hungry, okay. I arrived in Vallejo, Milton had gotten in before I did, so we regrouped and stayed in Vallejo for a while waiting for, and we went to--I don't know now where Vallejo is now in relationship to San Francisco, because we had to go to San Francisco in order to get a ship out.

KT: I think it's about an hour.

EG: Okay, so then we stayed in Filmore district. I recall at that time that there was businesses and business section that someone had abandoned like. This is coming back to the Japanese reparations. Because, evidently, the Filmore district had been owned by the Japanese, I think.

KT: Oh, and then when they put them away in their concentration camps or whatever, they had to leave all their . . .

EG: And the Blacks had started moving in, I guess.

KT: Oh, and that was why Blacks started moving in . . .

EG: Yes.

KT: . . . because it became vacant.

EG: Yeah.

KT: Because now Blacks live in the Filmore district.

EG: That's where they (were). I was there during that time when all these beautiful--and they must have had all these businesses. And a lot of stuff going on. But . . .

KT: They interned, I think, some 120,000 Japanese by the time it was all over.

EG: Okay, right, okay.

KT: So was this actually happening when you were there?

EG: They had either (been) taken--okay, now, we're talking '42, right? We're talking December, December 19, so December and January.

KT: Hm, hmm. So there were a lot of anti . . .

EG: December of '42 and January of '43.

KT: There was a lot of anti-Japanese feeling in that area too at that time, or was it over? When was Pearl Harbor?

EG: Pearl Harbor was '41.

KT: Okay, so they were . . .

EG: But evidently they had gotten them out. So in other words, there was no strong thing. I guess they felt, pretty much felt, "Hey look, we got them where they supposed to be and where we want them, we got them under control." But the Filmore district was, I was impressed with the way, with the orderliness of it. I don't know what it's like now, the Japanese had it real beautiful. It was very beautiful.

KT: And you've never been there since?

EG: Never been back there since. And, I guess, we waited around then for a ship, because it was, you know, you had to go in a convoy. So we took the time . . .

KT: Oh, you couldn't just hop on a ship and just go any day?

EG: No, no, no. No, they had to pick the days and they picked the convoy for us to go out on. We came on a (troop) ship. And we were on that boat for thirteen days. And I think for two of those days we were docked, trying to wait, you know, I guess, for the right time, and then we were on the ocean. Travelled from there eleven days, from San Francisco, it took us eleven days. I think I got seasick the minute I walked down to the docks. (Laughs)

KT: So you stayed on deck the whole time.

EG: Actually I exaggerate, but I think for about three days after we were on the ocean I was sick. Sick, sick, sick. And we travelled on a troop ship. There must have been, I don't know how many men on that ship, but it was very well packed. And then, I recall as we started cruising into Pearl Harbor, you know, the contrast of what I had been exposed to for, what, eleven days or so, and all of a sudden you start coming to the Hawaiian waters, and I started seeing a difference in colors in the ocean, and stuff like that as we cruised in, the greens and stuff like that. And all of a sudden, "(This is) for me," something just came over me and, "Hey, this is what I want. This is for me." (As we) was cruising into Pearl Harbor, it was like going to heaven.

KT: Okay, stop, stop, that's a great place to stop. (EG laughs.) Next time, we'll pick up, we'll pick up with the Hawai'i experience. That's a great place to stop. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 18-13-2-88 and 18-14-2-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest Golden (EG)

June 7, 1988

Ka'a'awa, O'ahu

BY: Kathryn Takara (KT)

KT: This is June 7, and we are having an interview with Ernest Golden by Kathryn Takara. And we are right now in Ka'a'awa, O'ahu.

So Mr. Golden, do you want to go ahead and tell me what it was like, what happened to you when you got to Hawai'i? It would be war years or was the war over?

EG: Well, it was--the war was still on. I arrived on O'ahu February, 1943. Broke. (KT chuckles.) It was like a frontier and we went to CHA3 [Civilian Housing Area 3]. I think the first--the fourteenth naval district and we--the day I arrived, I'm trying to get this thing together, I don't know night or day or morning right now. But we were like--it was like military. All Hawai'i was under martial law. We were very close to Pearl Harbor. CHA3 is about two miles out of Pearl Harbor. I guess, maybe CHA3 is what--you would have to see it.

KT: Well, you should maybe say a little bit about what CHA3 or [CHA]2 is for the . . .

EG: CHA3 is Civilian Housing Area 3, and it was the housing area for the civilian workers and mostly from Pearl Harbor--civilians, civil service workers. And I think the majority were from Pearl Harbor. There was a mess hall and there was recreation hall, there was a banquet hall, and there were some houses that had been apartment-like buildings that had been erected. And usually, I think, there were about four two- to three-bedroom units to the building. And I would say, at that time, only bachelors, only single, men were here. Pretty much men.

KT: Was it an integrated unit?

EG: No, no. The units were not integrated. CHA3, I suppose it went from Main Street, and I'm trying to recall, but I think Trinity Missionary Baptist Church is located on Main Street, now. Main Street toward the ocean, that must have been about four blocks. The two blocks closest to the ocean were set aside for the Negro. And

the mess halls were pretty much--the mess halls were integrated. The barbershop was segregated, [the] theater was integrated. There was somewhat of a theater, then it was a banquet hall. But overall, I think, there was integrated and segregated, (chuckles) combination of both. It was sort of a weird set-up, really. And I think at that time, the majority of the--majority of us, I think, both White and Black, were from the South. Why this was so, I don't know. There were a few, both White and Black from the eastern states. I think some of the Whites [that] had got to be (well-known in Hawai'i), at that time, were just ordinary civil service workers. I think J. Akuhead [Pupule aka Hal Lewis] was there at that time, I think Eddie Sherman, I know was out there at that time, who later became a writer, a columnist here. I knew Eddie Sherman at that time. There were others. There was a beer garden there. I'm just trying to pick out a few things. But there was also a BQ, bachelors' quarters, there was a bachelors' dormitory, about four stories. I think this was erected later. That's pretty much the layout. Now, from 1943, February 1943, I think I stayed there in that community till--I was nineteen when I arrived--nineteen, and about twenty-five, I left. . . . It's about six years. I guess I remained there about six years. I don't know what else I can say about it.

KT: What about the morale there. Was there an acceptance of this segregated barracks? Was there any protest about it?

EG: If I recall, I'm trying to--I('m) try(ing) to remember this--I do know that at one time, there was either a riot or the starting of a riot and this was a race riot. But I don't recall the details of it. Why I don't know, why I can't recall, don't recall more about it, but there was something there. There was tension because you had a mix of Blacks and Whites from the southern states and they'd never been mixed before. This was one of the things.

I do know we would all go into town periodically. You'd go downtown Honolulu. There was a curfew, ten o'clock curfew. And we all tried to rush back from town to beat the curfew and we'd all crowd on the buses, and the buses were very heavily loaded. I mean, people hanging out doors and out the windows, (wherever) they could, you know. And there was fights on the buses. There were fights at all times between Blacks and Whites on the buses.

The funny thing about it, at this time, the relationship between the local people, local men and the Black men was close. It pulled apart, oh, in the '60s, but at this time, there was what you would call, an empathy from the local people as to what the Blacks had endured. They sort of, I guess, sympathized with us to a degree. Now, let me explain this.

You'd be on the bus, and there would be a fight between some Black and some White, usually, newly arrived Whites from the Mainland. Those who have been down, who had been, what do you call, down under, had been on the front, came back and was seasoned people and

had they somehow or another, (had) gotten a lot of that stuff out of them. But frequent arrivals, you know, newly arrivals from the Mainland, these were the ones that got on the bus and all of a sudden they had to start calling names, and they had to start doing this, and there would be a fight. And the bus driver would hold the buses, hold the doors as long as the Blacks were winning, he'd keep the doors closed and then he'd drop, just let them off (chuckles) when they got to the bus stop, when everything was over, he'd open the doors and let the Blacks disappear. They were on our side for a long time.

I guess, noticeable at that time, some of the things that I reflect on now, there were very few women at that time. The ratio of women to men was 125 to 1 [e.g., 125 men for every woman]. And this was quite, this was pretty rough. And a few of the married men would send back for their wives. There was very little relationship between the Blacks and the local girls. Local girls would get on the bus, (but) wouldn't sit next to you.

KT: Why do you think that was?

EG: Because she had been told by the Southerners, I think, he [e.g., the Southerner] was sort of establishing his foothold that, first of all, that Blacks were not to be trusted. He went so far to say that Blacks had tails and if they had a baby, the baby'd be a monkey and all that sort of garbage, you know. So she sort of--you'd get on the bus and sit down and she would make sure that she just got up and left. She just wouldn't let you sit next (to) her. (There) were the exceptions, there're always exceptions to everything, and I think that some, as they went along, found that the Blacks were easier to get along with. We had the dance hall downtown. Now, this was a little, how you say, this is a little--has a negative side. There were three main things that were very much in demand during the war. And I got to be just point-blank. One was prostitution, the other was the dance hall, the taxi dance halls. The theater was another, and booze. There were actually about four. And you would have lines downtown, from Hotel, I think you started Nu'uaniu Street coming back 'Ewa, you came to River Street and 'A'ala Park, from Nu'uaniu Street back to 'A'ala Park, were more or less houses (of) prostitution. And from Beretania down to Hotel Street. Down to Hotel Street. That whole section in there was pretty much red-light district. You would get in a line, and it was either going to be one of three. It was either a line to the movies, or a line to go the liquor store, or a line to go to the house of prostitution. The taxi dance halls were segregated. The houses of prostitution were segregated.

KT: Does that mean that there would have to be Black prostitutes or whatever they were, they would only take male . . .

EG: They would only take male clients.

KT: So the Whites would go to one line, and the Blacks would go to

another house.

EG: Mm hmm. Blacks always went to a different house of prostitution. They weren't necessarily Black women. There were very few Black women in Hawai'i at that time, anyway, very, very few. But it was segregated. Theaters weren't segregated.

Moving away from CHA3 to some degree, downtown within the area where I just sort of outlined, was from Nu'uuanu back to 'A'ala Park, there were a lot of bars. Lot of bars and clubs. They were all pretty much, most of them, segregated also. And some you didn't want to go into. The Brown Derby for a long time, which was one of the top clubs (Down)town, was segregated. There was a club across from the Swing Club, and I cannot for the life of me recall the name. It was noted for its blatant segregation. And I recall that a man picketed the place. His last name was Johnson, I don't know what ever happened to Johnson. But I made signs for Johnson, I was attending art school about this time. And I made some signs for Johnson to picket the place. And he picketed--one-man picket out in front of this--Jack Cione owned and bought the building later on. He bought it or leased it, and he put a club in there.

KT: Who?

EG: Jack Cione. But later, this was much later. But it's right across from the Swing Club.

KT: Was the Swing Club segregated?

EG: I was trying to remember, I don't recall the Swing Club being segregated. I think the Swing Club was pretty much, from the beginning, open to--was pretty much a Black club. Two Jacks was a club, was (a) lounge and eventually a club and hangout for most of the Blacks in town. This was where all of the happenings (were) I guess. Interestingly enough, the major hotels and things at Waikiki were not. The first-class clubs were not segregated. Funny thing about it, we all went downtown instead of going to Waikiki. A few of us went to Waikiki. A good friend of ours used to go to Waikiki, Walter Alexander, who was--you know Walter.

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: Walter used to hang out--I didn't know Walter at that time--but Walter used to go out to Waikiki. I think Walter sort of established some stronghold out there. Few of us who were a little bit more adventuresome would venture out to Waikiki and I think, by and large, because of this, enjoyed a better social life than some of us who sort of relegated ourselves to downtown Honolulu, Hotel and Smith Street and that sort of thing. I mentioned, Nolle Smith who we were just talked about a little while ago [prior to actual interview], had El Morocco. When I first came here, El Morocco was on Dillingham Boulevard, right at King. All of these clubs, all of these bars, all of these (places) were packed. I mean, wall-to-wall

men, wall-to-wall people, pretty much men. It was like a war area. It was like a wartime area is what it was.

KT: Were there any Black business establishments at that time? Were there any restaurants or clubs that were run by Blacks?

EG: There was a restaurant--and don't quote me on the name. It was a southern, I want to call it a southern fried chicken place. I (knew) the owner. The owner's name is Jack Munford. Now, Jack Munford ran a first-class restaurant. It was very, very--and his clientele, and this was in the early '40s. It was on King and Alapa'i Street, right across from what at that time was called the Honolulu Rapid Transit, HRT. Did a booming business, seemingly, from where we were: white tablecloths, silverware, all first-class. He lost his lease, but he did run a first-class business.

Two Jacks, the club that we frequented most of the time was started by a Black by the name of Julius Delifus [spelling is uncertain], I'm hoping I'm pronouncing the last name properly. Julius started Two Jacks from what I gather, and later, because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, I think he thought that they were going to take over (Hawai'i), so I've been told. So he sold out to a Japanese guy name Dan Iwai. And Dan was akamai enough to put a Black man in charge of the place, very sharp, very sharp man, I think out of San Francisco, named Al Hooper. And Al Hooper ran Two Jacks for Dan Iwai and during the time that he ran Two Jacks, Two Jacks made money, Dan made money, and we enjoyed Two Jacks. That was, well, I guess everybody thought actually Al owned Two Jacks, but he didn't. Then as I said before, this was just a bar, but Nolle Smith had El Morocco down on (Dillingham at) King Street.

During this period of time going back to CHA3, [Louis] Hughes ran a record shop and sort of--as far as we know, it was a record shop, and maybe sort of a variety store. But he was very enterprising because he, I think, made a lot of money out of (the) place and this was during the war. Why he closed it and what happened, I don't know.

And off and on, and then other places that have been started by Blacks, I don't recall any other Black business to speak of. We didn't get into business. One reason why we didn't get into business, because we, how do you put it, we didn't have, other than that one or two blocks on CHA3, we didn't have one area where Blacks had gathered to the point where it was conducive to have a business, and this was intentional. I think, and I often criticized us for that. We're just so afraid of creating a (Black) ghetto here. And I've often tried to find a name, a term to apply to this, and I use assimilation, assimilating into the community, of trying to lose our identity in the community we try to lose our identity into the Hawaiian community. And I think we try to blend, and because we try to blend we didn't have, we lost it, we lost our identity and losing our identity we lost any possibility of having any strong business needs of, how do you say, the demands that come about when you have

a group of people living in an area where there's a commonality of interest.

KT: The ethnic and cultural . . .

EG: Yes.

KT: . . . was kind of lost.

EG: Yes. It was. It was lost. We lost it. [During] the CHA3 days, there was little or no social entertainment and (there) was (a) loss of culture, loss of any financial clout, that sort of thing. But some of us got together and started some sort of social life for ourselves because most of the social life at that time was within the--you know I told you about the units that had four apartments to each building.

On the Nineteenth, I think we're talking Eighteenth and Nineteenth Street. I want to say Eighteenth and Nineteenth Street. And some of the bigger, some of your better known Blacks now are from that, those two streets. But the married couples, most of them lived on Eighteenth Street. And this little socializing that went on at that time was usually in the home. A little party, little pockets of parties here and there.

The bachelors, as such, I told you there was a bachelors' quarters down there. The bachelors as such didn't have (the) social outlet and I also mentioned there were very few women. But some of us got together and started some (social life) of our own. Some of the bachelors. I was a single at that time. Ten of us got together and created what was called the Ten Bachelors Club. And this was quite a successful social club. And all of us were single guys and by giving affairs that were well done, well promoted, we sort of gathered around ourselves enough female interests in order for us to get dates and that sort of thing. So we made out like champs, but that was due to the Ten Bachelors organization. Finally, one of us got married and I think that was (the) wedge that was driven into the Ten Bachelors Club, and so we finally dissipated. We finally all got married, I guess once we got married, there was no need to be having the club or anything like that.

KT: It's a bachelors' club. (Chuckles)

EG: That's right. Oh, we were way out. We were a beautiful group. One of the highlights of our affairs, we hosted, the Nat King Cole trio, on (their) first concert here in Hawai'i. We gave him a reception at a Chinese club called Lau Yee Chai's at the time in Waikiki. It was a big thing. That was a highlight, one of the big things. We did a few things. We gave other functions that were very well attended, but eventually, as I say, we broke up.

KT: Would you charge fees?

EG: (It was) invitational. Usually invitational. It was--usually each one of us would have X amount of invitations that we could extend to our friends. So it was strictly invitational. Seldom did we give pay affairs. Funny thing, at that time, money wasn't even--everybody had some money.

KT: Mm hmm, because you were hired by the government.

EG: Yeah. Well, money at that time was so. . . . You could walk over and say, "Let me have twenty, thirty dollars"--a total stranger, he let you have some money. But don't ask him for his bottle or something like that because whiskey was rationed and you couldn't get any booze. They had the local brew at that time, the local liquor was Five Island gin, and the whiskey called Ninety-nine, and this stuff you had to chew (it) you didn't drink it. (KT chuckles.) They had two local beers, I think, one was Primo and the other was, oh God, I can't recall the other one. But they were brewed so fast, they were green when they (sold it) in the bottle. Primo and Royal.

KT: And in the commissary, you couldn't buy booze at the commissary?

EG: You were rationed. You were rationed, and you were given a ration card and I think you could go out and you were entitled to pick up maybe one or two during a period of time. I don't know if it was one or two a month or one or two a week, but you used that ration card and bought some booze. I always used mine and traded (it with) the guys (who) come from down under, they'd have expensive things that I would trade (for).

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

KT: Okay, well start back with the Lā'ie experience and buying the land and building the house, how you got it done, and what kind of community you found up there.

EG: Okay, my family and I, my children were young, my son [Bruce] was about two years old by that time. And we used to all gather there [at Lā'ie Point] for outings. During this time, there was only one house there that was occupied. There was another one that was incomplete. And, well, first of all, let me tell you what happened. I had gone, you know I told you I was looking for this land for this organization. And I went to Lā'ie and saw this piece of (land), I got the information out of the newspaper. So I went back to the realtor. And what they had advertised was 25,000 some-odd square feet, for thirty dollars down. And I went to the real estate people on Richards Street right across from the post office. And there was a Japanese guy named Hanao, who had the land, who was head broker, I guess. So I went in there and asked him about it. And his partner was a Portuguese guy named Medeiros. And this was a little bit interesting. He (quoted me a price of) thirty dollars down and thirty dollars a month. Somehow or another, I had to go back. So when I went back the next day, (and he said), "Look I'll sell it to you. Although, I had been advised not to." In other words, this

area was supposed to be restricted. And someone had told (him not to) sell to me. He said, "But look, I'm not going to--" how he put it. "I am going to sell it to you, but don't let me down" or something, words to (that) effect. A long time ago. This must have been in early '50s. And he said, "Look, there are two parcels there. Would you like them both?" And he said, "Well, they're adjacent."

"And how big and how much is the other ones?" The other one was 24,200 square feet. "What, how much is this one?" That was thirty dollars also. So, sixty dollars down, and sixty dollars a month, I started buying 49,400 square feet of land on the water, beautiful view of Kane'ohe Bay, a view of Lā'ie Bay, unobstructed view all around. And so, the family (my wife's sisters and their husbands) used to, we used to all go out there to just camp out overnight and picnic, and that sort of thing.

My brother-in-law, he's married to my wife's [Evangeline] next oldest sister, the sister next to my wife. He is a stonemason and a carpenter and all that sort of thing. So he says, "Listen, why don't we build a stone house out here? Because it's on the water and then you don't have to worry about rust and all that sort of stuff." So, we started, I guess, he must have put the idea together. Six months later, he came out there. We had hauled in a pile of rock, possibly twelve feet high, (chuckles) we had the stone to start building our house with.

KT: From where did you get the stones?

EG: We got it up at Ka'a'awa, the Ko'olau, what's that, Ko'olau Ranch?

KT: Kualoa.

EG: Kualoa. Kualoa Ranch. My wife and I went scouting around the island trying to find--I used to go around the island trying to find stone houses, okay, so I could see what they look like. So, we try to find stone. So, my wife and I went to the guy--this ranch house up there and we asked the guy if we could pick up the stones. So, he said yes, so we went around the ranch picking up stones. And, (later) we went up closer to the mountains, my youngest brother-in-law and I--(tape inaudible) with the pickup trucks, hauling stone from here down to Lā'ie. We hauled stones till times got hard. Then finally, my brother-in-law and I started building it. And we built it. We moved from Kapahulu, in order to start doing this, to Kane'ohe. And we moved near to where my father-in-law's house was, you know, where my father (lived) in Kane'ohe. Back up against the mountain there's a Catholic monastery up there. The Likelike Freeway cuts right through the yards of the house that we were living in at that time. So, we stayed there two years while we were building this house.

KT: And you would build it on off days?

EG: We built on weekends.

KT: Weekends. You were working at the airport?

EG: Yeah. So, we come out here every weekend, my brother-in-law would come out here every weekend, and I would buy a couple bags of cement and we would put a big fifty-gallon drum of water, because there's no water down there. Fifty-gallon drum of water on the (pickup truck) and we'd stop by the beach and pick up some sand, and we just start out to spend those two days--we'd spend a day out here and then come back. On a Saturday we'd come out and lay a row of stone and then come back Sunday and lay a row of stone. And finally, we got it to the point where we got one section (completed). We had a bath and then the rest of it was open. Equivalent of two bedrooms, and we moved in.

KT: You had a roof?

EG: Yeah, yeah. And at that time . . .

KT: Were you paying him?

EG: Yeah, I was paying him all the time. By this time, there was one other person, Mrs. Montgomery. They'd moved (to La'ie Point) before. They had built by this time. So, they became--she was local, local kama'aina family, Hazel Montgomery. And she became a very strong supporter of us, this young family, she and her husband. And they sort of--it was like pioneers out there. And they came to our behalf and sort of helped us along.

Now, the community, at that time, was interesting. It's a Mormon community, and at that time the Mormon church was very anti-Black. I don't know whether it still is or not. The church doctrine was. There were some Samoan (people) out there and every once in a while, some of the young Samoan youth would come by the house, I think. I know one day, I heard some rifle shots. And, I saw these young guys up there shooting rifles. I just went out of the house and walked up where they were and told, "Look, we've got children playing out here, so you guys have to stop." Must have been two or three of them together, and I don't know what--evidently, my boldness and my straight-forwardness and my attitude toward them is look, you're wrong, and I don't have any feelings to it, other than what you're doing, but nothing personal. They decided to--you know what they did, they left. But then they came back later on that day. And, I, at that point, told them, I think, in so many words, "Look, I don't have anything against you personally, but we cannot have you shooting rifles out here." There was no--they came back for a confrontation, physical. And somehow or another it didn't happen because, I, it wasn't anything personal. I think they thought it was something personal against them as a race of people, but I didn't have anything against them. And I guess, somehow or another, they sensed it.

From that point on, we didn't have any problems with--we were pretty much left alone. We developed a very close relationship with the Haole people who lived, who moved (on the point), some military, and they'd rent. By this time there were about three or four more homes out there. So, the children had the whole point to roam on. By this time, I must have had, I think, three children by this time. Very wholesome, very nice atmosphere.

Incident that happened later on--but funny thing, the Mormons would come out--by this time, there must have been maybe five, six houses there, or maybe more. And the Mormon missionaries would come out on the point [La'ie Point]. And they would go to all of these houses, but they never went to ours. Now, I attended, in 1957 and 1959, I enrolled in the Church College. It [Brigham Young University-Hawai'i] was called the Church College at that time. It was a junior college. And I was attending school there, I was an older student because I had been out of high school quite some time. I was a good student. I made very good grades. I studied the Book of Mormon, I made very high grades in the Book of Mormon. Religious studies, I did so well, that one of the professors, (told) some visitor here, and all I'm saying now is to make a point. A visitor here from Utah, went to one of the professors, and somehow or another the conversation came out, if he [the visitor] wants to talk with anyone who knows about the Book of Mormon, "Go see Golden up on the point [La'ie Point]." And this lady came up to talk with me about the Book of Mormon. Now, I never knew, and I don't know till today, that much about the Book of Mormon. However, I did trick them, and I'll come back to this in a moment. But during this period of time I was attending school there, the missionaries would come out on the point. And they knew me. Do you know, at no time did any of those people come to our house? They'd come to the house before ours, before my house. They'd go to the house past my house. They'd go to the houses across the street. None ever came to my house. Strange thing.

Another interesting situation, and all these little isolated incidents that may or may not be meaningful. One of the professors, the athletic professor at that time, I've forgotten his name, a very fine fellow. Since I've lived in La'ie, I've gotten to know some very fine people in the Mormon religion, very fine, this (was) one of them. I had a white German shepherd at that time. He had a German shepherd also. And he wanted to breed the two, so we got to know each other. And I guess, through that, through that interest, that common interest. And from this, he would come out to my house at times and we'd have friendly conversations, and he was telling me that I should join the Mormon church. And here's an interesting thing that I found out about me. And he said that the Mormon religion, one of the doctrines (teaches) that, all souls at one time was White. And that eventually they would be all be White again, so therefore, why not come on and join the church. And it dawned on me at that time, really a breakthrough. I have no desire to be White. This was astonishing. I told him, "I have no desire to be White." And that--it was a total breakthrough. I had never known up until

that point that I had (chuckles) no reason to want to be White.

During this same period of time, Time magazine came out with an article that said that the Mormon church was prejudiced against Blacks. And we're talking about the '50s, the late '50s, before civil rights and all that sort, before Martin Luther King. And I, at that time, was the only Black in Church College. And, yet, I found out that I was being used as an example of their nondiscriminating policies. Because one of the professors came up to me and, in the class, was discussing this article that was in Time magazine, and he said, "Look, here's an example. Here's Golden here, and we're not prejudiced." And I was the example of their nondiscriminatory practices. Now, that was an incident and this was all before the whole class. Now, I made the highest mark that year in the Book of Mormon because I tricked--I used trickery. And one of the key questions in the finals was, "Does the Book of Mormon advocate discrimination?" And I had 'um--it was an essay type thing. And I wrote the Book of Mormon does not advocate anything, the words, I paraphrased a bit. However, those who read may interpret whatever they wish and they loved it, they ate it up. They ate it up, and I got a perfect grade for--the only perfect grade in that whole school. And this was one of the reasons that I was supposed to know so much about the Book of Mormon. I fed them what they wanted to hear and they ate it up.

My wife at that time and during the time the children were in school, (was) very active in PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] and doing little things around the community and in the schools and this paved the way for the children because she being active in the school made it--the children, the teachers and everything could understand who the Goldenes were. At that time, I guess, we had a little money, we had a little wealth, a little worth, a little value. And I, at that time, had become one of the owners of the company that had employed me at the airport. And . . .

KT: What was the name of that company?

EG: The name (of the company) that I was then owner, part-owner of, was Honolulu Airport Porter Services. I (had) prepared myself for this thing (ownership), incidentally. I had gone from Brazell's Porter Service, and I had taken a lot of responsibility and helped him [Hampton Brazell] when he hired me. This was the first man, who I told you who hired me. And I became his right-hand man. And then he lost it [his contract with the airport] and then the airlines gave it to (an) ex-policeman named Bill Smith. And then, I became his head man, and he lost it. So, by now, I had gone through--being the person who was in charge of everything without the name or the compensation, and I thought by now, hey, look, I've got it, so why don't I take it?

So, I went to school to study business, business administration. This is why, you see, Church College. And as fate would have it, when I finished, the opportunity presented itself that I could

become one of the corporate owners of this, because by this time, Bill Smith had lost his contract. So, this was in the late '50s and I became vice-president and general manager of Honolulu Airport Porter Services, eventually--at one time was hiring, I suppose, more Blacks than any other business here other than Civil Service. I, at one time, hired, and I used to keep it open because it was kind of difficult for Blacks to get jobs, and I used to keep--I used to make sure that if there was any sort of applications that--I would give the jobs to Blacks, because it was kind of difficult for them to get employment elsewhere.

But, I attended Church College because it was an opportunity to get a good education at a very inexpensive fee. I abided by all of their the rules and regulations. I was a smoker at that time. I drank, but I did nothing on the campus grounds to cast a reflection on them. I tried to, look, you're doing something for me, the least I can do is abide by your rules and regulations.

So, but, it was a strange community. And it was a strange community that we came up in, that my children grew up in. They made friends later on in life. My son [Bruce] came home when he was very small, in elementary school, and this was one, two, maybe first, second grade, something like this. And he came to me--this is my oldest son--and he said, "Dad, what's Black VIN-NE-GAR?" And we slowed it down, we heard "Black nigger." And this was--someone there was calling him a Black nigger in school. And come to find out, it was one of the Samoan kids.

I, first of all, knew that, hey, you can run, but you can't hide. Now, remember I knew, remember when I told you (that) when I first (got married) we were having difficulties getting (a place to) rent. I didn't--wanted out of this mess, you know. But here I've got my child here and I've got to give him something that's going to take him, that's going to carry him through life. So I sat down and talk with him, (I) said, "That's not Black the VIN-NE-GAR. They're calling you a dirty name." I said, "Now, I know all of them. I know all of the names because I've heard them all and I could teach you names." I said, "But, let's not spend time learning the names, let's get as much education as you can." I said, "Because the person who's calling you names--you get all the education--you'll be able to hire this man. So, rise above name calling and apply yourself to your education and get as much as you can, because you'll be able to hire him." And this is what he took back.

KT: Second grade, first grade?

EG: He was very small, in other words, he was very (young). He was in Lā'ie Elementary. And I think Lā'ie Elementary went up to about fourth or fifth grade at that time. It was in the beginning. Old enough to understand what I was saying, old enough to accept what I was saying. Whatever age that the average intelligence can assimilate this sort of stuff, that's that age he was. And he paved the way. This is what we taught our children. But, (their mother)

her activities in the community. She, at this time was a Methodist. She was attending Methodist church. I never became a Methodist. I helped build the Methodist church a little, did a little work on it. She helped build it, she helped work (with) the PTA, she helped in the school, so all of these things sort of established us in the community. I was busy at the airport trying to put that big void between poverty and me. This was what I was after. She took care of the household. We finally succeeded to a degree on a small scale. But, this was the community--then afterwards, as they grew up, because of the combination of these things . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

EG: . . . in 1950, no up until now, I had not met my wife. I met my wife through a friend. Rev. Collins was one of the first Blacks to start a church here. And his daughter was a friend of mine. His daughter was dating a buddy of mine. You know, the guys who lived in the apartment, we got the apartment [together]. She was dating him. And she and the girl that I eventually married worked together and she introduced me. And we were--we dated and some of our closest friends were still at CHA3. My wife was about nineteen, I think, at that time. And dating wasn't, dating--my wife's Portuguese, and a Black man dating a Portuguese girl, White girl in those days, it wasn't the most accepted thing. You could walk up and down the streets together and you were going to get some remarks, you definitely were going to get some stares.

KT: From who, what kind?

EG: Hostile. Usually from the Haole. Usually from Haoles, sailors, the Haole civilian.

KT: And say, what would they say?

EG: "What that White girl doing with that nigger?" (Chuckles) This is usually the comment, "Look at that nigger with that White girl" or something like this, you know. I know one night some things, you know, how things come back to you, I was telling you that one of the couples--I recall it was my wife's friend, the young lady, my wife's very close friend. And another couple, married couple who were friends of theirs was Evans, Milton and Mary Evans. And Milton and Mary Evans lived at CHA3. And Mary Evans, my wife [Evangeline] and (Ivory) Collins worked together and so, whenever we dated, we--this was one of the places we could always go, and it was a sort of wholesome place for a young couple to be, okay. I remember one time though, I had taken my wife on a date and I'd used Evans' car. And we were parked in the back of the house in the driveway in the back. There was a parking lot in the back. We parked there, just like young couples were doing. When all of sudden, on both sides of me

came up, on both sides of the car, came, I think, the vice squad because they made, made us, they made it pretty miserable there for a while. I'm sure it was the vice squad.

KT: What did they do?

EG: Well, the comments they made, and they made remarks at me, and I don't recall exactly, but it was derogatory, it was, this was a vice squad. These were local cops. They were local people.

KT: Vice squad means people that deal with drugs?

EG: Drugs wasn't so pronounced in those days, it was, I suppose, maybe they thought my wife and I were going to--were necking, were possibly going to go have sex in the car. Maybe they decided they were going to prevent it if we were.

KT: But vice squad, in those days just meant a regular policeman or . . .

EG: No, vice squad was--well, if now, it would be drugs, I suppose, this would be number one now. But, heck, Hawai'i at that time, had some pretty strenuous laws as far as what you could and couldn't do.

KT: Such as, can you remember, such as?

EG: What was the vice squad's primary purpose? Gambling?

KT: I see.

EG: They were all, in other words, these were--you got uniform cops, you got detectives, and then you got the vice squad that goes around and follow the, sort of undercover guy, right?

KT: I see. So, they're definitely not in uniform.

EG: No. They're definitely not in uniform. They could have been just two local bums out there deciding, "Hey, look, we're not going to--here's a Black dude with a White chick and we not going to, you know, we're not going to put up with this jazz, okay." But, dating a Portuguese or Caucasian girls in those days was a little bit rough. It was not quite as bad as Georgia, but it was bad enough. So that you--funny thing about my wife, just sort of rolled off her back and never touched her. And I guess I was the one because people would make remarks, and she wasn't even aware of what they'd be talking about. But, no one--there was no physical abuse at any time. Don't know if I would have put up with it in the first place. No, I wouldn't have put up with it. Maybe that's my life.

KT: So then how did you decide--when you decided to get married, did the race question come, did you all discuss that it was going to be an interracial marriage and were there going to be problems with the kids and all that? Or it wasn't even an issue?

EG: It wasn't an issue as far as she was concerned. I think I was aware of it. I was aware that it wasn't going to be a bed of roses, I think. Strange thing about my wife [Evangeline], my wife had never, my wife did not know prejudice. She's an unusual person when it comes to that. She has no prejudice.

Her father, now, my wife's mother was dead, and she had--came from a family whose father was raising them. She had two brothers that lived with them. A brother who was older than she, about a year or so. And she was the oldest girl from a second marriage. There were four other daughters. It was a large family. They lived, their parents lived in Kane'ohe, her (family) lived in Kane'ohe at that time. Her father was an unusual man. The first time that she took me over to introduce me, I had reservations about meeting him. I don't think that she even thought (about) what she was doing. She took me to their home. A very pleasant place. It was a small house, but he had done such wonderful things with the grounds all around it. It was a very pleasant place to be. Not too many of the modern day [conveniences]. My wife's (family were not) rich. I think her father had come upon some pretty bad times by the time his second wife had died. I think her father had come--her relatives were pretty big on Maui. I think she had one uncle who was a judge on Maui and she had one who was in politics here and so forth. So the family, his brothers and sisters, I think at one time, had some money. But he had fallen on hard times.

Anyway, when the first time I was introduced to him, he was such an outgoing man and he welcomed me with open arms. And, there was no--and the children, all were younger than she, and I think, and they sort of looked on me as some sort of--they all gathered around and the youngest child just sort of fell in love with me and adopted me, and then her family sort of took me over. This was the ones on the second--actually, (these were) her immediate sisters and brothers.

She had a stepsister by the prior marriage. Two stepsisters and a brother. I didn't meet the brother for many years, but the oldest stepsister, when they heard we were getting married, I think, she went to the whole family, and that was--this was when, I think, that her family became aware that, hey, there's a big difference here. Because her sister was the one, her sister being older, you know, she stirred it up. Her stepbrother was married to a Filipino, I think about this time I think, yeah, he was married to a Filipino. So evidentially, he had gone through some of the things that the sister was subjecting us to. I didn't meet him for many years after that. But when I did meet him, there was no tension. We got along quite well. It was a long time, I mean I'm talking about years and even now, that this sister and I, this older sister and I, because I just avoid, in other words, it was her thing, and I happened to be independent enough (at) that time not to get two tinker's damn about what she thought. And, my wife's father, he never changed.

KT: Despite the sister.

EG: He never changed. He was always, up until the time he died--we were very close to Father, very close. Most of the sisters were very close until they, I think after they got married and then, the family started branching out, then you find that--because we used to always, as young people, party together and all that sort of stuff. Now, my family, who was not with us, didn't take to it too well. We visited with them.

KT: Oh, you went, you took her to [Georgia]?

EG: Yeah. We went. Well, we took the whole family, and my whole family went back later on. Funny thing about it, she would always write my mother [Viola Johnson Golden] and send pictures of the wedding and all that sort of stuff. I think it hurt her when she went back there and my mother had all the wedding pictures and everything around, but she didn't have ours. She didn't have ours out. I don't know what Mama did with our wedding pictures. I think Mom decided, hey, look, back in those days, maybe just as well. My mother is a pretty fine person. My sister didn't accept us. She didn't take to her [Evangeline] too well.

All in all, I don't know if I'm a funny sort of person. I think that this sort of thing that did exist and could exist did not touch us so much because I, to me, it's all stupid. And I've tried to pass this on to my children and I think I sort of fortified my family by this attitude that I have, and I think maybe, as I told you a while ago, I have met so many people of varying backgrounds, and I've loved people from various backgrounds. Funny thing about it, I happen to love people. And I think, because of that, hate doesn't penetrate me to the point, and I think I sort of passed it on to my family.

KT: And your wife must have been like that, too, as you say, because she didn't have a sense of [prejudice].

EG: My wife never had it. I don't know if my wife got it, my wife if she ever got it, she must have got it later on in life, if she got anything at all. No, my wife (does not) have it. My wife may have been prejudiced against somebody else, or (an)other race. Funny thing she was never prejudiced against Blacks. She has been one of the most, like a bull ox. Staunch. Her children [Bruce, Carl, Karen, Kevin] are the greatest thing in the world. She thinks that her children are the greatest thing and her grandchildren. And it's, you know, it could have been different.

She could have--my children don't, my children don't look like anything but Afro-Americans. You know, you can tell there's a mixture there, but not to the point to say, well, look, you can pass, or something like this. They don't have that sort of thing. And my wife has taken--she never, at anytime, and I have looked at it, now, you know, naturally I'd have to see if there was any feelings that my wife [had] about her children not being White. And it's never been there. It's been just the opposite.

Her grandchildren now, are inheriting that sort of love that she has without--she's just without prejudice, as far as Black people are concerned. She'd be prejudiced against Filipinos, you see. Of course, she used to grow up [with] them or something like that. But, no. And for that reason, my children are fortunate and I think I'm fortunate, because I wouldn't have put up with it in the first place. If I'd found she had it, I think it would--you see, you don't come from background that I came from without being aware of the slightest little bit of prejudice. I can sense it before it gets to me, and if I'd sensed it in this woman, I wouldn't have married her. It's that's simple. I never would have gotten married.

KT: So, did you have a big wedding or a small wedding?

EG: Not--I could say a medium. We got married at CHA3. (Mrs.) Evans acted as matron of [honor]--Evans, Mary Evans's the one who put the wedding reception and everything together. We had a wedding at a banquet hall. I don't know how many people were there anymore. But, it wasn't a small wedding.

KT: And then where did you move to once you married. Where did you live?

EG: Good question. Where did we move to? Oh, we moved--we lived in that apartment we had above Queen's Hospital. We moved into there, and then we stayed for about a year, and my first child was born there. And then, we moved to right at the borderline of Kapahulu and Waikiki, right across from the library, you know the golf course?

KT: Yes.

EG: Right over there. We moved there. And that's an interesting story because, I think I sort of mentioned this once before. Housing--and that's one of the reasons why I live where I am now, too. Housing, renting houses in those days, was a son of a gun. People didn't want to rent to the Blacks.

KT: How, why? Why do you think that is?

EG: Prejudice. They were prejudiced. That's basically what it was. That's the only thing I can say. Because what we used to do, when we were looking, we lived on Miller Street. Remember we had the apartment on Miller Street, this friend of mine and I. So, when we got married, this is where we moved to. So my wife and I stayed there until my son was born, and this was about, yeah, after we got married. And, after he was born, we decided that we should get on, you know, move out from this apartment. And we started--she started, because I was working, she'd go out and look for and find a place. She'd go out and find a place and it would be for rent until I came along, you know, when she and I got ready to sew up the deal. And then all of a sudden, the place was rented, okay. And, you knew

then, after about two or three times, I knew what was happening. So, I would get on the phone and the first thing I'd say, is, "You got a place for rent." I('d) say, "Now, look, I'm of Negro ancestry, and if you have any feelings whatsoever about renting to a Negro, you let me know right now, so you don't waste my time, and I don't waste yours, okay." Funny thing about it, I found that they would be, first of all, they didn't want to be branded with that sort of thing. And they'd come out with the truth then, in other words, you could hear them, ha ah, whatever it is, on the phone, but you got the straight dope [story]. In other words, here I am now, let's face what you dealing with. I did this to a man that I got to know quite well. And I called up this guy, my wife had found this place. She liked it so she came back and told me about it and I went and called him up, Edward Caminos. And Ed Caminos owned Kaimukī Plumbing. And I got on the phone, and I said my same spiel.

He said, "Wait, I don't care what color you are, as long as you pay my rent." So, we rented from him. I think, yeah, it was seventy-five dollars a month. It was right above--there was a grocery store down below. He had a building there. Had two apartments, about two one-bedroom units--two-bedroom units. But, his daughter and her husband stayed in one unit, and we rented the other unit, nice spacious apartment. And I think at that time, we were paying seventy-five dollars. Right at Waikīkī, just two blocks from Waikīkī. Right at the Ala Wai. And we stayed there for quite some time.

Now, during the time, again my dates get a little bit close here, they get sort of squashed together. I had been looking for the Ten Bachelors, I'm sure it was the Ten Bachelors, I don't know why it was doing it--no, maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was another organization I was with. I was looking for some land for an organization I was with, to build a clubhouse. And I saw this ad in the paper and I drove around the island, and I came out here to Lā'ie, and saw this beautiful place, this beautiful lot.

KT: This is Lā'ie Point?

EG: Mm hmm. Nothing, just a peninsula over the water. And I went back and told the group that I was representing, and they said, "Naw, it's too far." And I decided hey, look, I'll take it myself.

Now, I'm not sure--I must have been married when I did this. But, we had been married very recently. Now, but, I decided then, to build out (here) because we were running into--I knew I wanted to raise a family and I'd been running into this discrimination thing, this prejudice thing, as far as renting homes. Here we are, my wife and I, when we were just a couple, without children, we're running into this sort of discrimination. Now, what's going to happen if we have children? I (didn't) even want to be bothered with it, so I bought the land out here and then my brother-in-law and I decided, hey, look, let's build on it. So, that's why I moved out this way, I think, for two reasons. Number one, it was a beautiful spot;

number two, it was to get the heck away from prejudice. I had my own thing so that I wouldn't have to worry about my neighbors or worry about somebody denying me the right to rent and saying anything to my children, because, well, we were a young family. I had one son and we were talking, and we were thinking about having a family. So, that's how I happened to come on this side, where I am now. But . . .

KT: Let's take a small break.

EG: Okay.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-14-2-88; SIDE ONE

KT: This is the second tape on June 7, 1988, interview with Ernest Golden. We're talking about Lā'ie and the values that were instilled in the children.

EG: I suppose we gave a certain amount of dignity to the children, because they started making friends, and most of the children started coming to the house and visiting at the house. He made--and this was the oldest boy [Bruce]--made very strong and lasting friendships. And some of the friends, some of his friends, were of the upper middle class. There was a middle class in Lā'ie. The (president) of Church College, his son and my son were very close. All of this sort of paved the way. His mother's activities within the community, his own input, his abilities to overcome some of the obstacles, he as a good student, not the--my wife partly had a lot to do with this too, making sure they (studied) at home. To me, a good student, and if the parent participates in the school, then you're going to sort of ride over any of the rough spots. So, without that much input from me, other than being, I suppose, some sort of support. Now, the other children came along behind (him) and the road was already been paved for them because Bruce had somehow or another, made a name for himself. Now, my next son [Carl]--and my children did accomplish quite a bit out here. I have four children. My oldest is now living in Utah. He's a musician, very good.

KT: What kind of musician?

EG: He is a vocalist. He writes and he arranges and he is supposedly one of the top [musicians] in Salt Lake, Salt Lake City, another Mormon community. And he's not a Mormon. Just an understanding of enough of the Mormon religion, to say, "Look, I'm not going to become a part of it."

My, other son, [Carl] the next one, was an athlete. Made all--he was top--in the first string in football, and basketball, and track.

He set quite a few records out there at Kahuku, as far as track was concerned. Later came back and coached track and football for a while.

My daughter [Karen] was on--very attractive--was on the team called the Raiderettes. And this is a dance team that's a little bit above the cheerleaders sort of thing. They had shows in the Blaisdell Center and all that sort of stuff. And some of the prettiest girls at Kahuku were all a part of it, about nine of them. One of her Raiderette teammates is now a movie actress who became Miss Hawai'i. And this is Lindsey, I forget, Lindsey's name, but all of these children used to. . . .

All of these people used to be around the house at one time or another. The house became sort of a gathering spot for a lot of the people in the community. Not so much the Mormons, because we used to have parties at the house, and we'd have a lot of booze around the house so the Mormons weren't coming out, but other people around the point [Lā'ie Point]. And then, the children, and then the children's parties and most of (the) school children would come here. So, their life in Lā'ie was pretty, I would say, (a) pretty happy one.

And then, this went on until the '70s, early '70s, I think, '72. By this time, I (had) completed the house. The house was in Ebony [Afro-American magazine]. They had an article in Ebony and this home was one of the homes that was displayed in Ebony.

KT: How did that happen? How did that contact come about?

EG: Someone came here and sent somebody from Ebony to talk about Blacks in Hawai'i and I was one of the people. So a guy came out to the house.

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: It was in '68. I think it was '68 when I took my family back to Georgia, but I'd always had ideas of going to Georgia and living. Did it and failed. But, nevertheless, I did it. We were preparing to leave the day that the guy came out to take pictures and interview us and all that sort of stuff. We were getting ready to come in town to take our trip to Georgia. And I had my wife and the four children and we were all going to go back, and we'd spend a month, I think, in Georgia to just stay there and [we] got into the community and had a ball for a month's time.

But, they built Kuilima. When they first put Kuilima. . . . You know when I first moved out here, used to be able to--the first time, the first few nights I'd drove out here, I was working nights and I would drive from the airport. I'd get off eleven, twelve o'clock and I'd drive and I would drive, and looked as if the road was endless. And it was lonely at night driving, and I would give anything just to see headlights from another car, and I remember, I

recall, the first time I had to drive, I did it in increments. I'd drive from the airport to Kāne'ohe, (where) I'd been living. Then, from Kāne'ohe, I'd drive to Waiāhole. And then, from Waiāhole, I'd pick another ten miles until I finally got home. Did it in increments. In other words, instead of driving from the airport to Lā'ie. But just anything, just to have some company on the road and then, they put (Kuilima) out here. And the drive that I used to do in forty-five minutes became an hour and fifteen minutes, an hour and a half. And [it] got to be too much for me, so in '72, I gave up and said, "Look, let's move."

So, we rented the house out at Lā'ie, and we bought (a) house in Foster Village. And we moved to Foster Village, and my youngest son says today I am the reason for his downfall. Because he hadn't finished, he never did attend Kahuku. Karen didn't graduate from Kahuku, she graduated from Radford. My next, Carl, he had graduated and we sent him to college in California. My oldest son was still living somewhere out in this area, I think. My youngest son [Kevin] had not yet gotten out of elementary school, so we put him into a school in Salt Lake. And then we started--so we left Lā'ie. And we stayed in Foster Village for two years. And this was quite close to the airport, at night it's just a breeze going back and forth to the airport. And we lived there, I loved it, I loved it. It was a beautiful home, and I didn't think I'd ever move back out here anymore. I thought I'd just rent it, you know, maybe forty, fifty years from now.

So, on the strength of that, before this happened, I had started building on one of the lots [in Lā'ie]. I sold the other lots, I sold it for what I paid for the two. But that left--so, then I had one lot, okay. I had the larger of the two. Then when we decided to move, I subdivided this lot and then sold the front portion. We're on the Kahuku side and then, the view that [we] used to have from the bay, they (built) houses out there, so they blocked my--I had a picture. I had a sixteen-foot picture window facing Kāne'ohe Bay, right. And they put these houses, and I said, well, if I can't have any view, might as well sell the bloody thing. So, we sold the front part of the (lot). So, we have an unobstructed view of the back, ocean side. Anyway, I didn't think we were going to live out (here) anymore. And then, we moved to Foster Village, as I said, stayed there two years.

And then, I'd always had ideas of going back to Georgia. And the (one) thing that I had told my wife about fifteen years or so, prior to--so this was, if we left in '74, fifteen years, which is about 1960. I'd always tell my wife, if the South ever settles its racial problems, it is going to economically go up, because I would tell her that everything is there. You've got natural resources, you've got labor forces, you've got good weather, you've got everything, right. This was before (the) Martin Luther King (movement). And this whole thing about the South and (confederate) money, save it, I knew it was going to happen. So, I told her, and at the time that I was (telling her this), everybody was leaving the South. They were

getting the hell out in droves. But what they were doing, is they were leaving land to be picked up (bought) for a song and a dance. Land down South, I would look on it from my point of view (comparing land cost) in Hawai'i, you go back to Georgia, and I felt like the Japanese who had come from Japan to [invest in] Hawai'i. Pick it up, just buy whatever you can. So, my idea at that time was to buy some of this land that was being sold (so inexpensively), okay. And [I] went back before, I think, the late '50s, early '60s, and was going to buy 2[00] or 300 acres but finally wound up buying, I think, a smaller farm, with the idea that, hey, I'll hold on to it until the price goes up. Eventually, I may want to go back in and live anyway. So, I had bought this prior to us going back there in '68. (When) we went back in '68 we already had it. And so, in going back in '68 was a look see for my family. I wanted them to see the place and get an idea of what it was about, wanted my family (my parents and other relatives) to meet them. So I had two or three purposes to serve. My wife knew, and it was her idea, "Well, why don't we live there for a while." So, we took a month. Rented an apartment there and just went all around. Now this was before . . .

KT: Where, where were you?

EG: Athens, Georgia. This was before Martin Luther King had--now wait a minute, I'm going to tell a lie in a minute. Because in '68 . . .

KT: He was dead.

EG: The civil rights movement was on. He was still living--okay. But, the changes, you could--we liked what we saw. I knew that this was the festering hole for discrimination and prejudices, and I knew, that, hey, if I take my wife back here--let's see what's happening. And we had fun. We enjoyed it. The children enjoyed it. We went to the theaters, we went to the restaurants, we--for thirty days.

KT: Did they think she was Black?

EG: No. They didn't think she was Black. I just don't think that they considered her as White. You know, the South has some funny ideas. They don't think Italians are White, they don't think Jews are White. I think you got to be from up in the hills of Georgia, then you're White-White, right? So, she was partially considered from Hawai'i, and they would--see, they would look, they would turn--if they could look away and not see something and say, well, listen, hey, she's from Hawai'i, so she's--it's there, so why not fool yourself to the point and say, well, listen, that's not something that you don't have to accept, because she's from Hawai'i, she's a Hawaiian. So you, you know, you can live with this, as long as you don't come out and blatantly say, "Hey, this is a White woman." She (could) be white as snow. But then you also have, you also have Blacks down there who are White.

My uncle at that time, this is just (an) aside, my uncle who is dead

now, who he and I used to listen to blues together all the time, paid me what I considered the greatest compliment. When he first met my wife, we were, I guess, (tape inaudible), he said, "Hey, your wife, man, she's just one of (those) pretty yellow (women)." But that was his mark of endorsement.

Anyway, we came back and then at that time, we started--I made more trips.

KT: You went back to Foster Garden?

EG: Yeah, we came back to Foster Village.

KT: Foster Village.

EG: We stayed in Foster Village, bought it in '72 and then we left, I left in '74. At the time that I left, I retired from Honolulu Airport Porter Services. I retired, I suppose, right at the peak (of success), because my income was good. We had statewide services. Statewide, we had all of Honolulu International, we had the inter-island terminal, we had services on Kaua'i, Maui, and the Big Island. We had the whole state. I had something like about 111 employees at that time. (For) the time (since) I left art school I could (taste success), just peep in over the top of the wall to see salvation, right, I saw the promised land. I had bought an apartment building in Kalihi. You know, I told you that we [Blacks] came here and we decided to lose ourselves in the community?

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: I was a mason. I was head of Masonic Lodge. I was a worship master. And this was in the late '60s. And at that time, the masons, (the Masonic Lodge) had the cream of the Black men in this community. And I told them at that time, listen, why don't we combine our resources financially, and buy us a commercial building. At that time, we could have picked up a beautiful building for almost nothing, okay. And they said, no, we don't want to. And whether they said it as a group or maybe one or two said it and the others sort of endorsed the concept, said, "We don't want to do anything that's going to create a ghetto for us, okay."

I said, "Okay, fine. If you guys aren't going to do it, then I'm going to do something." And March of the next year, I bought an apartment building in Kalihi. Not the commercial building I had wanted. It was a four-story building, I think I bought it out of a whim or something like that. But I did buy the building, but I was looking for a commercial building. I always wanted to have something that says, hey, either Afro-American on it or something to say that we were here, right. We passed up that good opportunity. But, as I told you, I could just look over the wall and see, I could see financial security. I sold the apartment building. I had bought five homes in Waimanalo. I had the home out in Lā'ie. I had the home in Foster Village. I had 50 percent of the business that

we had. And I had bought the property back in Georgia. I wasn't doing too bad. Wasn't too bad at all. So, this is when I decided, hey, look, and by this time, I was working--you see, let me put it this way. I'm a pretty relaxed sort of person. I usually feel that I smile easily. I had found, hey, I wasn't smiling, (because of) the tension. I gotta cut back. I was going all the time. I was constantly going. I could no longer smile. There was a frown on my forehead. It was wrinkled up there. And I was saying, "Hey, listen, you better cool it. Slow down." So, this was when I decided to retire and go to Georgia, okay.

But (the) plans that we had been discussing, my wife and I--I had drafted plan after plan after plan. And my idea (was) to (start) an outdoor recreation place back in Georgia. The small farm I had bought was ten minutes from downtown Athens. Athens is the seat of the University of Georgia actually. Athens was built around the university. The university was there first and then Athens sort of evolved around it. Athens has a population, fixed population of about 50,000 people. The university has, what do you call, (an) undergraduate student body of about 25,000 or so. So, during the school year, you've got a population in Athens of about 75,000 people. But I looked at it, and said, with a community like this, you must have the young, what do you call, yerppies [yuppies]? This is the young businessman.

KT: The buppies or the yuppies.

EG: The yuppies, the young, yuppies. In Atlanta, which is seventy-two miles away, they had Calloway Gardens and they had other big recreation places away from Athens. But I'm (thinking), this man here must be driving himself--he must have young children. But the time he takes his young child for a weekend (to Atlanta) to go and get back, the child is irritable. Why not have him something close? So, I was going to build an out--I'd put manmade lake on the (farm) and I was going to have water recreation and camping and barbecue and picnic (areas). This is the idea I had drafted. All the time I'd be at the airport, I'm working on these things. Had (the) plan all, draft(ed) it in my mind. And in '74, I had everything all set to go. Well, I took the family in '68. My wife thought the idea was fine. I went back again in '73, I must have maybe made a trip even in between them, I know I went back in '73, to look at it from a financial point to see what it was going to cost me to put together this (venture). And it was fine, but something went wrong. In '73, the oil embargo went into effect, okay.

So, when I came back here in '73, I started winding down, closing up, phasing out my business. Tried to sell my business interest to whoever, I was going to sell to outsiders, the highest bidder. Doing the things you have to do in order to leave. By '74, I had accomplished this and we went, I took two children. My oldest son was in Utah, my second son was in California in college. My daughter [Karen] and my youngest son [Kevin], I took with me. Enrolled my daughter in the University of Georgia and put my son in

high school. My wife [Evangeline] stayed here to sell the house in Foster Village.

I did a dumb thing. I was there, well, before I did the dumb thing, when I got back there, because of the oil embargo, I had a fixed amount of money that I was going to use to put together this project. But the money, by this time, because of inflation, was no longer sufficient to do the job that I wanted to have done. And all the costs and everything that I had worked on (had) now escalated to the point where it (had) either doubled or tripled. And I couldn't even get a fixed bid on the recreation building I wanted to put together, not including all of the roughing work like the roads and the utilities and all that sort of stuff that (would have to be done). I had the bulldozers out there. I was bulldozing it out and we would--we had thirty-four acres we were dealing with, and I had the bulldozers going in, but not just clearing it off, but clearing off sections because I was going to have clearing spots here for large and small parties and stuff like that, for picnics and stuff like that. And in the meantime when I'm doing that, my money was going out and I ran into a situation one night where reverse discrimination. This was a foolish thing that I did. But, I said the reverse discrimination caused it.

I scrapped the idea and went for another idea. And that idea eventually evolved into me buying a supper club, instead of me putting my money into the original idea that I had. I ran a supper club there for a year and four months.

KT: Living there?

EG: My wife finally came. She sold the house here and she finally came down. But we moved there and I bought a beautiful (place), but the town wasn't (ready) to support the idea that I had going, and I went broke. And I then had to leave and come back and start all over again.

KT: But you had your house? And did you still have your--you sold all your other . . .

EG: We'd sold everything else.

KT: But you had your home.

EG: Had the home.

KT: And it was paid for?

EG: Yeah. Had this home here, was paid for. I had to go and mortgage it since, but it was paid for. And I'd sold all the properties in Waimanalo, house in Foster Village. And I had sold my interest in the business. So, we started from scratch in 1976.

KT: Your wife must be some woman.

EG: My wife is.

KT: Stuck with you just through everything. I mean through everything, going South, you know, and all of that. So then what did you start again with? What kind of business did you--did you start a business again?

EG: Not right away, not right away. I'd like to tell you sometime about the venture in Georgia. It was an interesting year and four months. Very interesting year and four months. I'm unhappy that I didn't succeed. (But) I made a mark in Georgia. When I came back here--I'll tell you that some other time--I came back here and first of all, when I found out I had to sell, and sell at a loss the business that I had bought, the supper club. I called up my former partner, my partner in Honolulu Airport Porter Services, was a Chinese guy. And he and I owned the corporation, fifty-fifty at (one) time. I had groomed one of my other employees. When I left in '68, a young man came to my office. Came, no--you know I was telling you that the day we were supposed to leave?

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: That they came out to do that Ebony thing. We were going into, (the) International Inn at the airport. It's now Plaza. But they had an International Inn there and we, instead of us taking my children from here and then going out to take the plane out, we decided to go and spend overnight in the International Inn so that we'd be fresh the next day to take a plane. So, while we were there, at the International Inn, a young man came to the office and asked me for a job. His name was Andy Anderson. So, I hired Andy Anderson at that time. This is the beginning of another interesting story.

KT: This is THE Andy Anderson [D. G. "Andy" Anderson, one time Hawai'i State legislator]?

EG: Not the--no. This is a Black Andy Anderson, not the White Anderson. I employed him and then we took off and went on to the Mainland for thirty days. But I gave him my card and said, "Look, give this to my supervisor, and he'll put you to work." And we left. So, I'm telling this story for a point. I think I've got a point to make. Anyway, I groomed him, this was in '68. When I got ready to leave in '74, I was trying to find--my partner wanted me to get somebody to train, somebody to take over as manager in my position. So I groomed him to take over that position. So, he became the manager (the position I held). And then, when I failed in '74, I called my partner and asked him for a job. So, he hired me as supervisor when I came back in '76. I came back as a supervisor under him [Andy Anderson]. And he'd been having some problems anyway. So, I started with him as a supervisor. But, '76, I think, I started with him, the first of '76.

The mind is a funny thing. By the time you--wherever you are, the

mind is looking for something to do, and I saw an opportunity for a business that was just waiting for somebody to take. Just waiting to start. But I would never really get that--you know, how you procrastinate. I'm a procrastinator. [I] had it all down on paper. The idea was to take over the baggage services, the baggage (storage) services at the airport. Do you know they're charging five dollars a bag, now, at the airport, three to five dollars a bag. I tried to compete with them. The business I started was to compete with them. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. I (had) always had the idea fully developed in my mind. And then, one of the other people that I'd been associated with on and off, (had) a need to really get into something. So, because of his need, he forced me to put this idea into reality. So, I started a corporation, he and I started a corporation called Versatile Services, which is what I have now. Versatile Services started out as a baggage center. And I was on--the idea--the basic concept was this, the airport has a storage facility. Because of security and just incompetence, it takes a person too long to check and claim a bag from the storage facility at the airport and it cost too much. So I said, look, what they need is for someone to go right outside the airport, near enough, with a pickup and delivery service to and from the airport. And I went--this is what I (started). I went out to Nimitz Plaza which is right on Nimitz Highway and we rented a warehouse. You know where Sizzler is on Nimitz Highway?

KT: Mm hmm.

EG: In that complex. I rented space in there. A little over 1,200 square feet and opened up what (was) Airport Baggage Center. And started a pickup and delivery service to and from the airport. And then, this was in 19--I opened up in 1981, in February. And then, because of deregulation in the early part of '80--latter part of '80 and the early part of '81, the company that I used to own and was now working for, went out of business. The airlines, started (cancelling) their contracts. And Anderson and I started--since I had the corporation, he and I started to work together, going to form a company to start getting some of these contracts. But then, he pulled away from me. I'd opened up in February, this was around April, May and June. By June of that year, I had started picking up the airline contracts, (in) the business that I'm most familiar with. Because of carriers breaking away and looking for a better price (and) because my former partner was not bending as far as them requesting him to reduce his cost. I came in with proposals that were so attractive to them that they then started coming toward me. To make a long story short, Anderson decided, hey, look, he had a more attractive deal with my former partner, who had offered some little tidbit over here. He pulled away and I went on my own.

By June 1, 1981, I had six airlines, and the Airport Baggage Center, and it was doing pretty good. I had started back again. Looked like I was on my way again. However, Airport Baggage Center was such a new concept, a new idea, I was endorsed by one airline. Japan Airlines had endorsed a concept wholeheartedly because

they had something similar in Japan, and I had a very good contract with them. But their flights from the Mainland, which what was feeding my storage facility, they discontinued. The concept was so new for the other travellers. It was too hard to sell them on the idea of someone coming and picking up the luggage and they're not seeing it, in other words, they wanted to see it in their little cubbyhole. They wanted to see it locked up. And I was competing with the (Department of Transportation) [DOT]. When things were real plentiful, when there were a lot of bags and there was an overflow, the (airport baggage people) would recommend my services. When things were lean (chuckles) and the (DOT) wasn't filling every room up, they would knock my services. So, this went on. So eventually I had to phase out that feature of the business and sort of concentrate on the porter services. And that was the business that I went into, and the one that I'm still in now.

KT: Well, now, when you say, concentrate again on the porter services, does that mean that when your friend went out of business, your former partner went of business, that you picked up the porter services again?

EG: A funny thing happened. In 1980, the latter part of 1980. Prior to that, when he and I owned the company, all the carriers came together in one joint pool and hired a porter company. In 1976, during my absence, United pulled out, and United was one of the biggest carriers of all. United almost had 50 percent of most of the traffic through here. That was right, just before I came back here. United pulled out. And this was a first breach into that sort of concept, the contractual arrangement between the carriers and the contractor, the porter service contractor. Then, because of deregulation which came about in 1980, he started losing one contract after the other. Now, I went to Anderson and told him, because we had been trying to advise my former partner. My former partner was Paul Leong, a public accountant, CPA. And since I didn't want to give Anderson the feeling of insecurity, I never tried to get (near) to Paul. But I would talk to Anderson, tell Paul to look, tell Paul to do this or tell Paul to do that or try to advise him through Anderson, but he was not listening and consequently, he was losing one airline (contract) after another. Even after we tried to advise him, he'd lose them one after another. So, I went to Anderson, "Listen, Paul is not heeding us, and he's not heeding advice that we're giving him. So now, since he's losing these airlines. Between the two of us, we've got most of the knowledge as far as operating (is concerned), why don't you and I--once we hear one [a contract] that he's going to lose, let's not take anything he's got. If he's going to lose one, then let's submit a bid for it." So, as these things would occur, I started putting together proposal packages and giving them to Anderson. Anderson would take them to the airline.

And they would say, "Hey, listen, we can live with this. Whose figures are these?"

And he'd say, "They're Golden's figures."

"We want to see Golden." So I'd go in.

By this time, things had gotten so critical, I had it, I knew that I couldn't no longer work for Paul and continue doing this. So I handed in my resignation. Anderson never did hand in his. And I started picking up one or two big carriers who said, "Listen. If we decide to do anything, we'll go with you."

Then, I think, Paul called Anderson into the office somehow or another, and offered him--Paul, by this time, had lost, possibly, 75 to 80 percent of all the carriers we'd had. And by the time, this was around, oh, I suppose, now it's about April of 1981. When he started taking some of the advice that I had been trying to get to him, it was too late now. And I had gone to him and told him, offered, prior to me doing this thing. I had offered him the benefit of my experience. And he said, well, he didn't need it, and that everything was going to be all right. And everything wasn't all right. So, he lost it. He lost like Northwest, and Pan American, Japan Airlines and one after the other, big carriers.

Then, he gave Anderson some little tidbit and Anderson came back to me after he and I supposed to be teaming up. We had not formed a company as such legally, but we were going through the ramifications of it. Anderson came to me and said, "Well, look Golden, I think I've got what I need." In other words, I don't need you. So, Anderson went his way. And I tried to plead and beg with him not to, you know, break this team up. But, anyway, we split. And then I wound up with the major carriers.

KT: And then, is that until this day?

EG: That was until the 1st of June [1988], till the 1st of June, I had the major carriers other than, because he (Anderson) eventually started picking up. He got Delta and then we became competitors. And when he got Delta, Delta finally bought Western, so in Delta, he inherited one of the big ones, and he became a very formidable opponent. And until about a couple months ago, and I decided that I lost, oh, two carriers, two smaller ones. And by losing two small ones, I decided, hey, look, I might as well get rid of a couple of them that are headaches, anyway. So, I reduced mine now to three major carriers. There were reasons for doing this and I'm not unhappy with the move. I think that what I've done, is sort of pruned off--you know, I look at this thing, and what I've got. I'm taking some drastic steps and I think that carriers that have stayed with me are surprised that I would do it. I think the carriers that I cancelled with are surprised that I did it. But, I had to look at it myself, you know once in a while you have a tree. In order for it grow, you prune it. And this is what I've done. My employees are happy with what I've done. I am not unhappy at all. Naturally, I'm anxious about the move that I've taken. I've got to stay right on top of it. But, it's the right move.

KT: So, you have three major carriers now?

EG: Yeah. I've got three of the bigger ones, I've got Japan Airlines, which is quite large. Northwest, which has always been a strong carrier. And, Pan American. Pan American could go either way. It could build back--it was once a great, could come back a great again, or it could bottom up tomorrow. But, I'm sure that Northwest and Japan Airlines, and I've got to look at saying, hey, listen, even if two of them left, would I still be able to survive? And in 1981, when I first walked into the man's office, and Anderson and I were together, and he'd say, "Listen, if you just had my airline, would you just take me alone?" And I made a commitment, yes, I could carry you alone. So, I have to look at it from that point of view. I've pruned it. I've trimmed everything down.

KT: And, how many workers do you have now?

EG: I now have sixteen. Owing to attrition and through dismissals, I've trimmed, got rid of ten because we used to carry a staff of about twenty-six. But I now have sixteen, and most of them on a part-time basis. But, if the program that we are on continues, we'll come out with an "A," and even have a triple "A" organization. And this is what I want. And for a while, you know, funny thing about it, you have people calling you one o'clock in the morning. The airline station calling you one o'clock in the morning because some cockeyed deal that he's failed to do, something he's failed to do himself, and he's calling you to cover his back. And what is the strange sort of thing, and I am now getting away from, I don't know if I'm getting, I'm probably getting away from something. From the time of deregulation, when Paul Leong and I had the business, it was a real good business. Along came deregulation, and what they're doing, they prostituting, the airlines are prostituting the companies, and they've got the companies competing one against the other, and banging heads, and the only person who is benefiting is the carrier. The carriers are benefiting. We're bidding so low, we're putting in stupid bids, and we're bidding so low, that we cannot pay our employees a decent wage. We cannot give our employees the fringes that they should have. And this isn't the way things should be. This is out-and-out exploitation. And this exploitation will continue as long as you've got--and Anderson and I, we're the two major companies there. As long as he and I are banging heads, this thing will go on. I have decided that I'm not going to do anything to upset him. I wouldn't go after one of his contracts, because somewhere it has to stop. There's another outfit out there, and this one is big. This is a very strong organization. It's called Ogden Allies, and Ogden is big enough to wait us both out. And this is what's going to happen. Ogden will sit by and let us kill each other off, and then Ogden will come in and pick up all the chips, [they will] pick up the marbles. And I hate to see it happen.

[Hampton] Brazell was--I wish, somehow or another, that some statements could be made about him. He was a man--because he was the one that started this. I often said that Brazell was in San

Francisco, and he got on the plane with a cap in his hand, and landed in Honolulu and started overnight, a business, that is now, sought after by many, many people. Now, here's a Black man that started something new in Hawai'i and when we first got into it, nobody wanted (it). We were out there making pockets full of money, spending all the money we wanted, and everybody was looking down on us, okay. And I tried to talk to our people at that time because, later on, you're making the money and we were making, gosh, and I hate to say how much, and these guys were driving up in front of the terminal in El Dorados, and Mark IVs, and getting out and parading their wealth before the world, and all of a sudden, the world started looking at them, and becoming envious of them, and pretty soon, they were no longer here, and those people who would never have considered picking up a bag or a cart, are out there in numbers and in droves.

Some of the services that had been started--Brazell started porter services out there and the first one to bring it here. From that, there were spin-offs to some of the other (businesses) out there at the airport right now. He was the beginning. Then, there was another man that he hired, that worked under my supervision named Pate that was the first man to start a trucking company out there. Jim Pate started the first trucking company out at the airport there called Jet Valet. He started a trucking company, he started, I think, a parking service, he had a number one service going out there for a while. He sold out, he sold out I think, (to) Amfac. He sold out to one of the big, one of the big (companies), you see. Another one who also worked for me, I think I employed him, started another trucking company out there. It is now owned by a Japanese (man). There was only one porter service. Now, you've got several. All spin-offs from what we used to do, all from--and you've got everybody and his brother now, with a hand truck. And we used to do it all, and when I say do it all, we were a greeter service . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

EG: . . . (There was a regular visitor to Hawai'i--he would) write me to let me know that he was arriving. I would greet him with leis, take him into Waikiki, get him into his hotel, go to Waikiki and pick him up when he got ready to leave, keep his car for him until he returned. We were doing things of this nature. We were meeting people--we were greeters. We were everything. Now they got greeter services out there, but we were doing the whole thing. We were information. They now got information people out there. We wonder what they're getting paid for because we did it all. We had been--this man came and started something that is--and no one ever recognizes him. He should have a plaque out there somewhere on John Rogers Airport, saying, "(Here is) a memorial to Hampton Brazell."

KT: Well, maybe the Afro-American Association . . .

EG: I tried. This is one of my main reasons to try to get the Afro-American Association, to get something going so that, number one, to make visible . . .

KT: The contribution, the . . .

EG: Make visible, to make visible the Afro-American, and this is my. . . . I got into the Afro-American Association through Harold Franklin. And, I don't know how much you know about Harold Franklin . . .

KT: No, I don't.

EG: Harold Franklin was very enterprising. He's no longer here now. His wife is still here. Enterprising man, very intelligent man, who came here to Hawai'i in the '70s, he says. Franklin came, I think, he was from Washington, state of Washington. Came here for the first time, I think, for the Hawaiian Telephone Company to do something for them. Franklin became frustrated here. With all of his knowledge and expertise, and I hate to use that term, the (word is) overworked, could not get employment on par of his know-how and efficiency. And he decided he wanted to do something about it. Franklin, in 1985, February '85, called--he and his wife and some other people--called together 100 and some-odd people that met at Hale Koa Hotel.

KT: I remember this, I remember this.

EG: Okay. Franklin's call went out to Black business and professional people. Okay. A lot of enthusiasm, a lot of interest was generated from this thing. And I was one of them, and to see all this Black talent there under one roof, the potentials of it was electrifying. I promised Franklin at that time, that I would support him and back him up and stay with him and I'd be the last person to leave him. I think I was.

Franklin, who was impatient and who was on an ego trip, would gather people to him, but because of these negatives, people would leave him. They would gravitate toward him and as soon as, for something or another about his personality, they'd leave him. And consequently by June of 1986, Franklin didn't have four, (but) four followers, and I was one of them.

But before this happened, I had gotten close enough to Franklin who steered away from his original concept, to finally, we had started to embrace the whole community to try to make visible, you know all these people who did not want to create this self-made ghetto, had been so successful that we had so lost, so lost our identity, that we had nothing. We had lost our (culture), political, economic (clout), everything. Any identity we had, we lost it. So we set out, the Afro-American Association, set out to undo that. This is

what, this was my interest in the Afro-American Association. And I've been, I tried to steer it in that direction.

Franklin finally stepped down (in) 1986, and then we picked it up. Alexander, Walter Alexander, Art Bennett and Redmond Humphrey. We got together and decided to keep it going. We picked up a few other people. We started out, four of us started out. Alexander's wife was supportive. My wife, who wasn't a member at that time, was very supportive. We met a few times and we finally got another person to come in and support us, and that was a (man) named Bigelow, he was in the military, very sharp guy. So from that, we started building it, and we have brought it to where it is now. But, we set out with that in mind. And I think we, to some degree, have been successful in making us a visible--the Martin Luther King thing with Coretta King, and now . . .

KT: Fantastic.

EG: We have made us. . . . We done some, I (have become) a little bit disenchanted, and I think I'm going to step down (as board chairman). I've been with it all this time, and I've devoted a lot of time to it. I think it's time that I step down in order to give someone else a chance. Hopefully, it'll be someone who'll continue with the direction that we'd hope it could go. And that direction was to unify, first to make visible, those of us in Hawai'i. This [oral history project] that you're doing now, will go a long, long way.

KT: Will stay a long time.

EG: Yes.

KT: It will be in all the libraries.

EG: Yes.

KT: And it will be permanent.

EG: Yes, yes.

KT: As long as we can continue to bring in people and the contributions, and that'll be fantastic.

EG: When I saw you the first time, talked with you that night at Reni's, and you told me what you're doing, I was so, so pleased.

KT: That it was actually happening.

EG: Yes. (It's been) a long time.

KT: Well, do we want to end this now?

EG: If you'd like to.

KT: Are there any other final touches of the contemporary scene that you want to include?

EG: The only one, the only thing that I would ever do, to mention what happened in Georgia, which has no relationship to Hawai'i, but it has--give it three minutes, about three to five minutes.

KT: Well, let's go for it.

EG: I went there with one thought in mind. No. That's not what I'm--let me back up a minute. When I changed direction, I went there (with) one thought, and that was to open up a recreation place. And then, one night I met a young White man. We stopped at--we were at the Ramada Inn. And he was from out of town. He was an Athenian who had left and come back. I was an Athenian who had left and come back. And we met at this bar, and we started talking. And we started drinking, and I think we got drunk together, and we went from there and we went to Holiday Inn. All the places that he and I couldn't have gone together when I was there before. And we went to one or two others, way into the night. And finally, I told him, "Listen, we've gone to all the White places. Now, we've got to go to one of the Black ones, okay." So we went up to, I know the guy, I don't know the name of the club, but it was a club owned by a guy named Killian. And . . .

KT: What was his name?

EG: Killian. K-I-L-L-I-A-N. His brother and I went school together, classmates. Four Winds or something was the name of the place. And when you go to it, there's a little window. You go to the window. (KT chuckles.) And this guy was behind me and I, you know, I'd gone to the place all the time. So the guy looks through the window, and he says, "Hey, you can come in, but he can't." And it blew my mind.

I said, "Well, if he can't come in, I'm not either." But, it really did something to me. Here was the reverse. Here was something that I had (been) against. I don't believe in discrimination in any sense. I don't believe one person, regardless of whoever he is, should do this to another person regardless (of color) black, brown, white, you don't do (this).

So I went ranting and raving, and the guy said, "That's okay, man, you know, it's all right." I guess it didn't matter to him that much anyway.

So I told him, "Listen." I said, "I am going to open a place (and everyone) will be welcomed. Anyone will be welcomed as long as they are mature."

And that was mistake number one. Not the thought, but what I was doing. I set out from that moment, to start opening a place. I had a friend there--a real estate person--(a) White guy--who I got to be very close (to) named Dean Beachem. Dean Beachem, when I went to

Athens would (always) invite me, (to) lunch. He called me and said, "Let's have lunch."

We're having lunch. And I was telling Dean about this incident. I said, "Dean, I'm going to open a place. And my place is going to be so, it's going to be so warm, that everybody, regardless of whoever." Then Dean got caught up in the idea.

He says, "Listen, here's a guy over here that you want to talk with." And he introduced me to a guy named Sandy Butler. And Sandy Butler, another White guy, Sandy Butler had a hotel [in] downtown Athens, that I used to not be able to do anything but walk in as a bellhop, (called the) Georgia(n) Hotel.

Dean told Sandy what I wanted to do. Sandy said, "Well, listen, meet me on a Tuesday," I guess it was about Friday or Saturday. "Meet me on a Tuesday and we'll go over something." So we go down to the guy's hotel. And he's got space, and there was a basement sort of thing, I wanted, just what I wanted. We were going to negotiate the rent, and I'd dropped my other idea, the idea that I (went to Georgia for) the recreation thing. So, we're negotiating the rental of this place, and this was on a Tuesday, and we're doing the process.

My daughter was at the apartment. When I get back home one evening, couple, three days later, and she says, "Hey, this guy, Sandy Butler's trying to get in touch with you, so call him up."

He says, "Come down, I've got something to show you." Okay. And I'm going to make this, not going to drag it out. I went to Sandy's, down to the hotel. He says, "Get in the car." We started driving out of town, and while we're driving out of town, there's one thought going through my mind, "Where in the hell you taking me? You don't want me in your hotel." This is the reason for it. What I was going to do in his hotel, was open up a piano bar. I had owned a piano bar here. Oh, during the . . .

KT: You didn't tell me you owned a piano bar.

EG: During (chuckles) the '70s, when I had this other thing, I had the Little Club down on King Street.

KT: The what club?

EG: Little Club.

KT: The Little Club?

EG: The Little Club down on King Street, a beautiful place. It was a beautiful place, seated about sixty people, had a sunken bar, and we used to have a beautiful time there. (Louis) Hughes used to play for me. Piano bar, and I had two or three waitresses. Beautiful. Red and black motif. It was a private club that I had bought from

somebody. It was fantastic. I went broke in there.

Anyway, I was going to open up a piano bar in downtown and it was going to be, it was going to be THE place.

KT: Classic.

EG: Very plush, plush. Small, but intimate, right? So, Sandy's driving out of Athens, and I'm saying the reason why this guy is taking me out, he doesn't want me in his hotel. So Sandy drives out to this place about, let's call it, from about downtown Honolulu to the airport, about four miles. And we (drive) to this, it was a schoolhouse, a little red schoolhouse. And we go into the place, and he's got a key to it, and it's beautiful. It had been a private club. All plush carpeting, shag carpeting, wall sconces, and a dining room, a cocktail lounge, a ballroom, a game room, everything, all very, very deluxe. And he says, "Listen, you and I are going to buy this. We'll run it. We'll put your idea, we'll capitalize on the White and Black trade here in Athens." Fine.

I go to my lawyer. I had, by this time I had a lawyer in town, so I go to the lawyer and says, "No, you cannot go in business with this man because he's a felon and therefore," and that sort of thing. Anyway, Sandy, I go back and (I) tell Sandy he can't go in business with me. I'm from Hawai'i, here was four acres of land, a duplex apartment on it, 6,000 square feet on the roof in the lounge, and they were asking (\$176,000). I was going to offer them \$100,000. (KT laughs.) And if they go for the \$100,000, I can't go wrong because I got the land and everything, right. I offer them \$100,000, they go for it. I've now got me a supper club, okay.

KT: But, out from town.

EG: Out from town. And I go into the son of a gun and I realize that there're a few things I've got to do. Number one, the White clientele, the White population, I'm going to get me a balance of White and Black. But I got to have five to one, because the White population is five to one. I get a promoter. I get a guy, a Jewish guy from Atlanta to promote the thing. I advertise on the radio, I advertise on newspaper, and I'd name it (the) Hawaiian Hale. The house of Hawai'i, okay. Inside the ballroom, on each side of the stage, they had--a little bit bigger than this wall here--and they had a stone waterfall on each side of the stage. I decorated Hawaiian style. I had eight cocktail waitresses. I had four Whites, four Blacks. I had two bartenders, both of them were White, one guy and a girl. I had a matron who sorted of got everybody seated, she was Black. I had a security guard staying at the place, and we went into business. We opened up. November, I think, of (1974). And every day on the radio you'd hear the Hawaiian Hale. And everybody was coming and the place was booming. For about four months, as long as I was plowing money into it. And I think, pretty soon, I'm putting it out [money], but not enough of it's coming in. That's it.

KT: Even though if a lot of people were coming.

EG: You (could not) open on a Sunday, you (had) to be closed at twelve o'clock (on Saturday) night. I had a Spanish trio, I had a country-and-western band on Wednesday, and I had soul, I had a house band (for) every night of the week except Wednesday. They came on about nine o'clock. My White clientele started dropping off, but for a while, I would say, for most of the year, I had created something (there) that had never been seen in Athens, where the two came together (White and Black) and there was never an argument in the whole place. And they sat and they'd drink together, and they got to know each other. And it was one of the most warmest places you've ever been in. And everybody loved it.

Through that club, we created a civic organization called the Hawaiian Civic Club, and it was (organized) in, we started, I think, in June. By October, we must have had seventy-six, or ninety-six members, and they consisted of educators, businessmen, (we) had the cream of Athens. (Athens') Blacks in it. We had the police club, (chuckles) the police had its own, the Black policemen had a club. All the schoolteachers met. The professors from the university, University of Georgia (chuckles), were in it. The students, the athletes, when they'd come into town, we would host (chuckles) all the Black athletes since they had no . . .

KT: Did you have a marquee or something?

EG: Huh?

KT: Did you have a marquee or something like that?

EG: We had, not, we had a big stationary (tape inaudible). Then, there were some police brutality. We took on city hall. The civic club (chuckles) tackled city hall. We shook up the police department. We had one or two policemen fired, we had one or two demoted, because of some police brutality. I've got to get the records for this. We opened on a Sunday, when you weren't supposed to. And we had a pageant going on. We had the first Miss Black Athens pageant in there. One Sunday we had, I forgot what it was, it was cultural thing, Black cultural thing. And the ballroom was, I could seat 200 comfortably in the ballroom. And there must have been standing room only in this ballroom, but they had all the dances and they had the grandmothers (attending). I didn't serve, wasn't serving a drop of booze, only thing serving was soda, and we weren't even selling that. And cars were parked almost one mile down the road (chuckles) and the cops came.

KT: And they busted you?

EG: The cops came in and (said), "Hey, listen." And I've got politicians in there. I've got the Athens Black politicians, and when I'm coming out of the duplex, coming up my steps, the policeman came by, say, "Hey, listen, what's going on?"

I say, "Well, we're having a pageant."

He says, "You're not supposed to be open on a Sunday."

And I stepped inside, I said, "Well, you have to tell these people (that)." I said, "You gotta tell them they gotta close." And by this time, one or two of the politicians, who, my cousin is, he's a legislator, or something like that, city councilman. My friends, were city councilmen. And two or three of them. And by this time, this guy walked in there and he saw the grandmothers. And he see all the children, and there's no booze. I said, "No booze is being served."

He said, "But you can't stay open."

I said, "Well, you got to do it, tell them to close it."

We stayed open, but they said, "Listen, we've got to report this."

So, they--what happened, anyway, in other words, they called me in the next night. So they didn't close it. We continued our program. But the phone started buzzing. The phone started working. The networking started protecting this Hawaiian, they called (me). When they took me, when they took me before the, they took me before the . . .

KT: Commissioner.

EG: County commissioners, and there was, I think, seven or nine. And they started the--they never had that sort of attendance. That night, when they met, the bloody place (chuckles) was crowded. So the commissioner say, "Listen, we didn't expect you to bring out your big guns." They had everybody there. And so, "Well, what are you doing?"

And so we explained that, "Listen, we didn't have no other place."

And there was one lady on the commission who came out and very strong in our favor. Said, "Look, the Black people in this community did not have, you got your country clubs over here, and you got all of this for the White people. The Black people don't have anything at all. There was no whiskey being served." (She) said, "Look as if Mr. Golden is providing a facility out here (and) that we should be supporting him in instead of us trying to knock it."

I got off scot-free. The didn't fine me, they didn't do anything. They gave me a little pat on the hands, "Don't do it anymore."

KT: On Sunday.

EG: Yeah, don't do it anymore on Sunday. But that's all. That was it. They, I guess if I had--this was in, oh, still latter part of

summer. We packed, we did two or three things. We did some electrifying things back there in a short period of time. In a short period of time. We did some exciting things. I mean, I've never been so caught up into something as I was in that sort of thing.

KT: But then, financially, it just wasn't pulling its own?

EG: No. As long as I had the money to put into it, it was going fine. I used to find myself--I don't know where I went wrong. You could look back on many, many things. First of all, it was too big, I think, for the town. Blacks don't go out. I had a happy hour. Blacks don't go out until around ten, eleven o'clock at night. Blacks only go out--and pretty soon, it became a Black place, and I've said, of course, I told my house band, I engaged a house band. I (kept) them all the time, same band, this was probably my mistake. And I told them to play music not too loud. So, at first, the first few months, the Whites would come out and they would get on the dance floor and dance. But then there was so much soul music being played, even though it wasn't being played loud, and we outshined them (on the dance floor). They were being outshined so much. The women, the White women, were still coming out, I think [until] the night I closed. But, the White men sort of steered away. And this was where the money is. You see, the White men there would come out four o'clock in the afternoon and you have your happy hour and they'll stay on. And they'll leave around seven, eight o'clock. Blacks would come out ten o'clock at night. On Friday night, ten, eleven, you got to close two o'clock on a Friday night. Saturday night I got to close at twelve, and they're coming out, I've got a packed house. The place is empty at nine, empty at ten, ten-thirty, I've got a packed house. So I've got one hour to make my money. And it just didn't . . .

KT: Not enough.

EG: Not enough. So finally in a (few) of months, it started going down. And I was--my income was a little less, a little less, and a little less, so finally I had to accept the fact that, hey, look, it's not going to go, and close it up. So, that was my venture into Athens, and my return to Georgia.

KT: But what an exciting thing you created and then maybe it will be picked up by, you know, someone else.

EG: It was so exciting. It was so exciting to have gone, to have been a part of that time, those things that happened. So very exciting.

KT: And so now you would say, where you are now is just working with a more limited business idea and just going to see that through?

EG: Yes. At present, I think the only thing I can--since it's been so recent, the only thing I can say right now, is to back up, regroup and come up with a very first class--that strategy here, that

strategy in my thinking, I've reached the point now, where I'm relinquishing more and more of my responsibility to the young team that I have. And if we are successful in what I think we will be successful in, that is turning this company into a very first class organization, that I know how to do. That there will be demand for the services, and hopefully by that time, you see, I'm just about ready to start taking it easy. I would now like to start painting. I've got some beautiful ideas that I want to put on either canvas, paper or somewhere, okay. And I've got about thirty, thirty years more to go. And those next thirty years, I'd like to be productive in some sort of artistic form.

So, I don't know, (maybe) I can be, act as advisor to the new team that I'm putting together, and if we are successful, within the next six months to a year in doing this, then there will be demands for our services. And hopefully then, the company can branch out and start moving out again, growing new branches and stuff. There's already, I think it won't take us too long for the carriers to take a look at what we're doing. There's already been some, some of the things that I have put into, I've implemented, are being noticed now, and it's being noticed by some of the carriers that. . . . You see what I've, I've done some things that could be very pronounced. And I was waiting to see if someone would notice what they were. They're simple, but it's a better mousetrap that I am now building. And I think that we've already gotten some--a man came (to) me, (the) day before yesterday and introduced himself and was raving about the type of services that my organization was providing, and that he was so impressed with it in comparison with the one that he has now. And this is what I've been looking for. I've been waiting for that sort of thing. So I must build on the concept that I have so that this company now will turn around and go back. My son, my youngest son [Kevin], I'm grooming him . . .

KT: Good. I was going to ask you . . .

EG: . . . to take over. Grooming him for it.

KT: . . . if you had anyone in the family to . . .

EG: Yeah. I'm grooming him. My daughter [Karen], my daughter for a long time was. . . . Funny thing, men for so long, were stupid. They never saw their daughters as being a great asset.

KT: Maybe Hugh Hefner (chuckles).

EG: Okay. I am glad that I have enough common sense to realize that. My daughter, I was grooming her to take over. But she (was hired as) executive secretary to someone here at Turtle Bay. And she lives at La'ie with us, so it was good. And so now, my youngest son, who has the brains and everything to do what has to be done, is interested. So, I'm grooming him.

KT: Excellent.

EG: And he, I can give it to him because he's receptive to it and he's ready for it. Up until now, he hasn't been ready. And I've got two or three other people out there who are young, and most of the people that I have now, that I'm trying to groom to take over are younger people in their late twenties and early thirties. So there's youthful growth here and so, I think I have a plan that's going to work. Just a matter of time.

KT: Well, we'll close it now, thank you.

EG: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Oral Histories of African Americans

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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